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Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment

- April 1997 -

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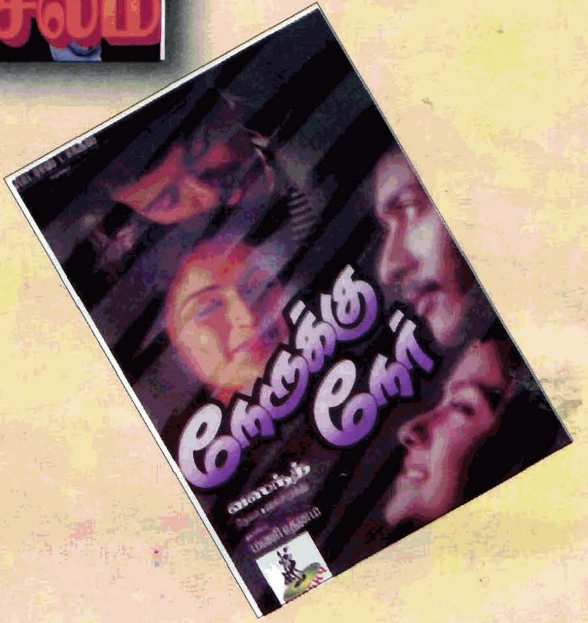

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Hot Spring

A journal of commitment

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Andy Higginbottom's review of the Sivanandan novel "When Memory Dies" has been unavoidably held over for want of space. It will appear in the next issue of HOT SPRING.

"What They Say"

International

"We are not the masters. The people are the masters. We are the peoples' servants. Forget that and the people will soon show that what the electorate gives, the electorate can take away".

British Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair, tells the record number of 418 Labour M.P.s on the opening day of the new Parliament.

* * * * *

"I think that China plays a very important role in United Nations affairs, and has a leadership role in the world".

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan paying his first official visit to Beijing.

* * * * *

"You do know it's possible to have a friendship with a woman without having an affair"

-One-time U.S.ambassador to India, J.K.Galbraith, on Jawaharlal Nehru and Edwina Mountbatten in the Sunday Times, London.

* * * * *

The future of this country is decided in the West. All the decisions are made by white men. There is a conspiracy against Zaire and we are the victims. Because we have some problems, you in the West made a monster called Kabila, and now that monster is out of control".

-53-year old Zairean woman loyal to disgraced President Mobutu, on rebel leader Kabila.

* * * * *

"This is all nonsense. Do you think that they (the Sri Lanka government) are genuine about wanting to improve things ? Their mala fides are apparent at every turn".

- Human Rights activist and President of the International Bar Association, Desmond Fernando, dismissing the much-publicised human rights drive of the Sri Lankan government. (Sunday Times, Colombo, May 4.

* * * * *

"Why are you seeking to arrest only my client and not Lohan Ratwatte, don't play games because Ratwatte's name has transpired".

- Lawyer Daya Perera appearing for suspect Bobby Perera, the suspect in the case in which Papua Guinean rugby coach was shot dead on May 1. Quoted telling the Police (Sunday Leader, May 4)

* * * * *

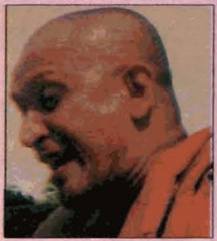
"Jaffna, the premier enclave of the Sri Lankan Tamils is on the road to extinction. The population is declining rapidly"

- Sunday Leader's "Roving Correspondent", April 27.

* * * * *

..The Tamil separatist movement which was heavily battered and substantially crushed by the overwhelming strength of the Indian army emerged in a more virulent form characterized by the suicidal Black Tigers as soon as an opening was made available. This would not have been possible if the population has been truly hit by war fatigue at any stage....Thge Eelam war is not a military textbook cake walk that many, including some western defence specialists think it has to be ".

- D.Sivaram, writing in the Sunday Times, April 27.



"Every non-Sinhala group who now fights for its rights is an alien body and at different stages they were either invaders, traders or sly-comers"

Ven. Maduluwave Sobitha Thera, fiery political monk, interviewed in the Sunday Observer, April 20.

"...The air force has been shattered by one disaster after another, and the navy, always unequal to the task of taking on the Sea Tigers, is embroiled in a series of financial scandals of staggering proportions. The generals it seems, are at a loss, and it is now left for Kadirgamar to make such a peace as he can on the battlefield left in tatters by Ratwatte."

- Editorial comment, Sunday Leader, April 27.

* * * * *

"Negotiations are under way for the importing of heavy weapons and gunships from countries like Ukraine".

- Sri Lankan Navy chief Vice Admiral Cecil Tissera, interviewed by Sunday Leader, April 27

"The Navy, during the last 2 2 years has lost approximately 27 naval craft valued at over one thousand five hundred million rupees and approximately 160 of its crew"

- Air Vice Marshal Harry Goonetileke writing in the Weekend Express, April 26-27.

* * * * *

"We have taken over most parts of northern area. We were unable to concentrate on the east because we had to take actioin to capture the northern area. By the end of the year we will capture whole of the Eastern province as well. That is definite"

- Gen. Anurudha Ratwatte at the Government Parliamentary group meeting, quoted by The Island's political correspondent, May 4.

* * * * *

"The people (in Jaffna) do not trust the SLBC.They would rather listen to LTTE's clandestine radio broadcasts or the BBC".

- Prof.Muni of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, after two visits to Jaffna.(Weekend Express, May 3-4.)

* * * * *

Cover Story

My daughter's NO terrorist; but remember those who were once called terrorists

"My daughter is not a terrorist, but remember, many important people have been honored to shake the hands of people who were once called terrorists. Look at Mandela".

That was 70-year old Australian mother Betty Wilby speaking. Betty Wilby is the proud mother of Adele Balasingham, born in the Victorian town of Warragul in Australia, and today living in the jungles of Vanni in Tamil Eelam. and looked up by thousands of Tamil youths as Adele Acca and Adele Aunty.

Featured in the Australian magazine NEW IDEA last year, Betty Wilby says:-

"I'm very proud of her. I trust her judgement. If the cause wasn't just, she wouldn't be there risking her life as she does. It can be no fun living in a war zone. She has to be admired. Whether you believe in a particular cause or not, or if you don't understand, you still have to admire a person who is doing what Adele is doing".

The interviewer Bill Ayres writes in NEW IDEA:

"In letters home to her mother. Adele Balasingham talks about the Supersonic aircraft dropping their "loads of death". They send a big jet to bomb and terrorise the community, she writes. "It sweeps over the area with the hell of a noise, terrifying everyone. It is so fast. It drops its bombs before you see it. It is really quite an experience, watching them circling and dropping their loads of death. I get really angry and wish I had an anti-aircraft gun to blast it off".

"Adele is a long way from the warmth, comfort and security of her home in the Victorian town of Warragul. This 46-year old nurse and scholar is also a Tamil Tiger, one of those battling Sri Lankan government forces for the right of the Tamils to win self-determination.She wears jungle greens and carries an AK47 rifle. It is claimed she plays a prominent role in the war and has the respect of the entire Tamil community, who call her Aunty Adele.

"Some would call Adele a terrorist, but 69-year old Betty Wilby, (1996), with the loyalty and blind faith of being her mother, will never accept such a label for her daughter. "The Tamils are

Adele with husband Anton Balasingham outside their bunker. (a 1990 photograph)

"How do you define the difference between an act of terrorism and an act of war?"

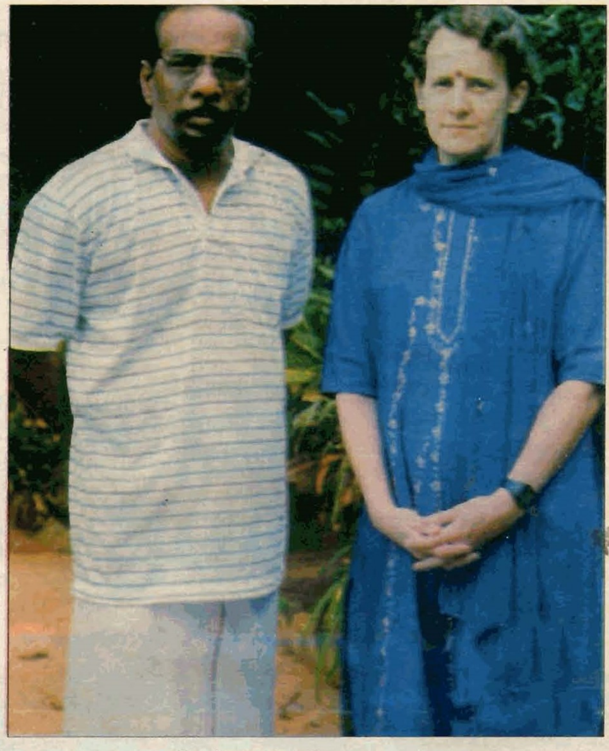
called terrorists, but how do you define the difference between an act of terrorism and an act of war ?", Betty asks.

"Terrorism does not come into my vocabulary. I can't imagine anyone calling my daughter a terrorist, but I also can't imagine anyone calling any of the Tamil people terrorists. They are gentle, loving people forced into a situation. They have no choice but to fight. People don't understand what goes on in the Tamil community, because what comes out of Sri Lanka fails to tell their side of the story.

"It is hard to get any of the true facts of their struggle out, and their struggle is great. The Tamils have suffered greatly. And I know my daughter would not become involved in a cause like this if she didn't truly believe in it".

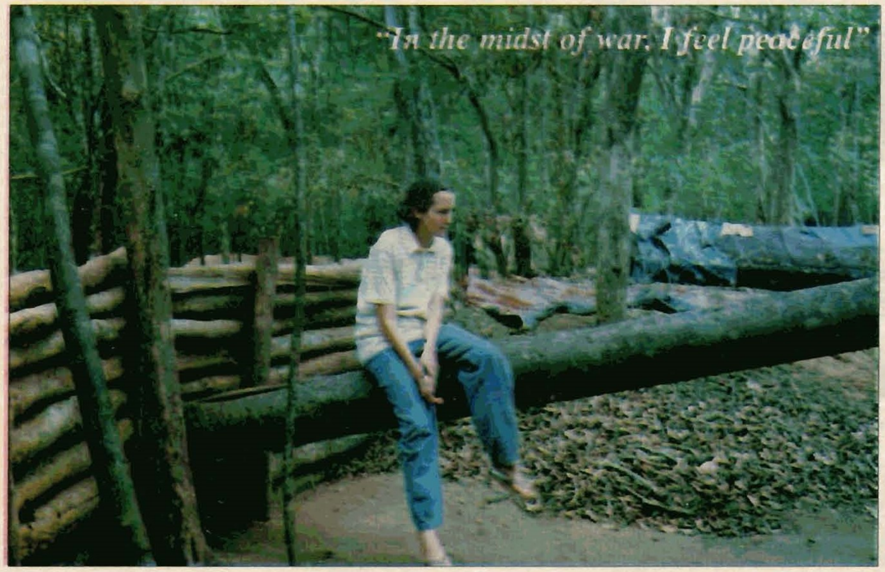
"Adele grew up with her sister and two brothers before leaving home and training as a nurse in Melbourne. She went to Perth, became a midwife, then decided to see the world. She worked in London and Rome before taking on further studies in sociology in London and becoming a social worker.

"It was there, about 23 years ago, that she met Anton Balasingham a lecturer and a Tamil. They fell in love, Adele learned of the plight of the Tamils and unhesitatingly vowed to do what she could to work with her husband and help them achieve selfdetermination. She has had her house bombed for her trouble, been shot at, threatened, and hunted by authorities.



"She is armed", Betty explains. "You must remember that she is deep in a war zone and she is entitled to carry a gun for her protection. There is constant danger around her and she has to be so careful".

"Adele's main work is caring for the sick and wounded, giving hope and comfort to the refugees and in educating the women and children. Her husband, affectionately known as Bala, is one of the leaders there.


"In the midst of war, I feel peaceful"

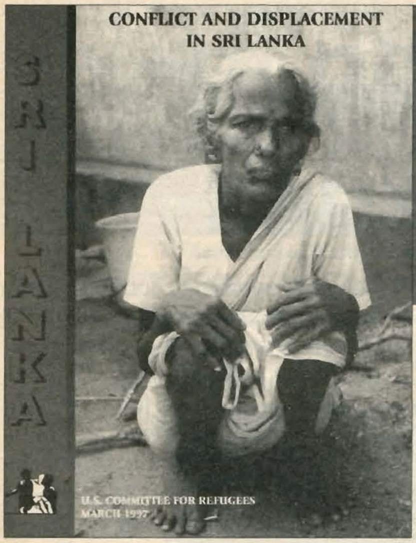
"Betty says: "Adele has always been a humanitarian. She is a very intelligent, humane, caring and unselfish person...she thinks of herself last and has always been like that....

"Adele has written two books since she has been in Jaffna and one of these has been about the women fighters. Between 1986 and 1992, a total of 381 women died in fighting for the cause.

"Betty last saw her daughter seven years ago and can only eagerly anticipate the arrival of the next letter. In her correspondence Adele tells of the war planes, the hundreds of people killed and injured and the awful stench of war. Yet she will also write: "While all this is going on, in the midst of this war, I feel peaceful. In the most unsatisfactory situation I have the best opportunity to learn and to study".

"Betty beams with pride".

Jaffna is virtually under martial law, - U.S. Refugee body


CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT IN SRI LANKA

SRI LANKA

U.S. COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES
MARCH 1997

CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT IN SRI LANKA is the title of a 40-page report issued by the U.S.Committee for Refugees, issued in March 1997.

The report written by **USCR policy analyst Hiram A.Ruiz and USCR Research Assistant Katie Hope**, based in part on their site visit to Sri Lanka and India in November '96, is not only exhaustive in content, but highly critical of the Sri Lankan military's deprivation of civil liberties, both in army controlled Jaffna and in the detention centres in Vavuniya.

Says the report: "... One does not need to scratch too far below the surface to see that the situation in Jaffna is far from normal. The city is, in practice if not in name, under martial law. **Many people live in fear. They fear being detained by the military and disappearing, as has happened to hundreds of others. Many men fear that their wives or their daughters might be raped by drunken soldiers.**

"Jaffna residents' lives are dominated by security concerns: checkpoints, passes, curfews, restrictions. There is little employment: most are dependent on food aid. And there is much hopelessness. Many people cannot envision a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict. As one woman in Jaffna told told USCR, "I think the situation will remain like this until die".

"People's freedom of movement is highly restricted from Jaffna. As many as 30,000 people currently living in Jaffna - five to ten percent of the population - have asked the government for permission to leave Jaffna, but the only routes south are by ship or military plane and,on average,only 45 civilians are allowed to travel by these means per day.

In Jaffna: What people said

"There is an "artificial normality" in Jaffna. The government tries to make it out to be normal. In Parliament, they tell themselves what a wonderful job they are doing - even though they know it's not true".

-International organization official

"War and displacement have strongly affected what was once a decent, educated society. There is much mental anguish resulting from deaths, displacement, destruction of property, dispersal. I don't know how long it will take to rebuild."

- Community leader in Jaffna

"The bottom line is: unless there is a political settlement, there will be no normalcy. The government's attempt to achieve normalcy through military warfare is not possible"

- Human Rights advocate.

"Disappearances are the most important issue in Jaffna. There must be a rigid system for ensuring that people are informed when their relatives are arrested. If that could be ensured, half the fear complex would disappear"

- Woman resident in Jaffna.

"Among the "disappeared" some may have been executed, or died as a result of torture. The government needs to come clean on human rights violations and the disappearances"

- Human Rights advocate.

"There were problems with body checking at some checkpoints. Women were being made to remove their clothes behind a s see-through curtain, which was an extremely humiliating experience...

-Jaffna resident.

"Withdraw occupying forces from Tamil homeland"

Geneva: Call by record number of 53 NGOs

Geneva, 10 April - A record number of 53 Non Governmental Organisations at the 53rd Sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights on 9 April 1997, called for the ending of the 'Sri Lanka-Tamil Eelam war' and the withdrawal of Sri Lanka's 'occupying forces from the Tamil homeland'.

The Joint Statement was made under Agenda Item 10 on the 'Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories'.

The large number of NGOs who made the Joint Statement was unprecedented and was an index of growing concern at the genocidal situation prevailing in the island. The number was more than double the 24 NGOs who submitted a Joint Statement at the 49th Sessions of the Commission in 1993 declaring that violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Sri Lanka continue at an alarming degree' and that Sri Lanka was 'dangerously close to splitting into two states.'

The 53 Non Governmental Organisations who made the statement on 9 April are in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. They included the International Commission of Jurists, the World Council of Churches, the International Human Rights Law Group, Robert F.Kennedy Memorial Centre of Human Rights, International Federation of Journalists, Regional Council on Human Rights in Asia, Pax Christi International, Pax Romana and the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples.

The 53 NGOs expressed grave concern at the violations of humanitarian law and human rights in Sri Lanka and at the 'new military offensive in the Tamil homeland' and noted that 'the civilian Tamil population continues to be a target of military operations'. The Statement added that 'there are more than 825,000 displaced Tamil civilians living under appalling conditions which include acute shortages of water, food and medicine' and that 'disappearances, extra judicial killings, rape, torture, arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention in the context of war continue'.

The 53 NGOs declaring that it was 'imperative that the Tamil People choose their own political and national status' called for a political solution 'which recognises the right of the Tamil people to determine their political status.' The 53 NGO statement follows upon an earlier declaration by 8 NGOs on 13 March 1997 under Agenda Item 7 on 'The right of peoples to self determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation' recognising that the Tamils 'constitute a 'people' with the right to self determination.'

The 53 NGOs urged the Commission to adopt a resolution 'calling upon the government of Sri Lanka to cease all military operations against the Tamil civilian population, to withdraw the occupying forces from the Tamil homeland, to lift the blockade in the north-east, and to allow humanitarian aid.'

Sri Lankan ambassador loses his cool

Report from Geneva by the Swiss Federation of Tamil Associations

Geneva, April 10 - Sri Lanka Ambassador Bernard A.B.Goonetilleke, clearly irritated by the increasing number of NGOs calling for the withdrawal of the Sri Lanka 'occupying forces' from the Tamil homeland, lost his cool at the 53rd Sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights on 9 April.

He alleged in an intervention under Agenda Item 10 relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, that the LTTE was spending 'a considerable amount on propaganda abroad, including payment for lobbyists with access to certain human rights NGOs with dubious credentials.'

Sri Lanka's latest attack on NGOs follows upon Ambassador Goonetilleke's earlier patronising remarks on 14 March under the Agenda item relating to Self Determination, that 'some well meaning NGOs' had been 'misled' into recognising the Tamils right to self determination.

Faced with the genocidal actions of the Sri Lanka security forces being exposed at Geneva, Ambassador Goonetilleke, appears to have shifted ground. 'Some well meaning NGOs' who had been 'misled' have now become NGOs with 'dubious credentials' who were being 'bought' for money.

Ambassador Goonetilleke has preferred to ignore the fact that the NGOs who have called for the withdrawal of Sri Lanka's 'occupying forces' from the Tamil homeland are in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and include the World Council of Churches, the International Human Rights Law Group, Robert F.Kennedy Memorial Centre of Human Rights, International Federation of Journalists, Regional Council on Human Rights in Asia, Pax Christi International, Pax Romana and the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples. Neither has he attempted to address the concerns expressed by Amnesty International and Peace Brigades International in their reports on the situation in the island of Sri Lanka.

Unsurprisingly, many NGOs will find Ambassador Goonetilleke's attempt to dismiss them as either knaves or fools, deeply offensive. Sri Lanka's track record in dealing with NGOs is evidenced by the disruption of an NGO Forum meeting in Colombo in November 1995 by political thugs connected to the ruling Peoples Alliance - with the security forces unable or unwilling to intervene to protect the safety of participants. It seems that Sri Lanka, unable to challenge the message, has taken to attacking the messengers.

In a parallel development, Ambassador Goonetilleke, intervened on 8 April under the Agenda Item relating to the 'Organisation Work of the Session' and called for 'streamlining NGO participation'. This was seen as a thinly veiled attempt to censor free participation by NGOs at the UN Commission on Human Rights.

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600 Disappearances: outrageous, says A.I

COLOMBO, April 11 (Reuter) - Amnesty International said on Friday that more than 600 people were reported to have disappeared in northern Sri Lanka in the past year and described the problem as outrageous.

It said in a statement from London that since government forces captured the northern Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stronghold of Jaffna peninsula between late 1995 and early 1996 the total number of disappearances reported to it had reached 648, the highest since 1990.

"That more than 600 'disappearances' can occur in one year despite the government's claim that it is addressing the problem is outrageous," Amnesty said in a statement from London.

"This highlights the need for action to be taken now-to prevent these violations from continuing," it said.

Amnesty and other human rights groups have accused Sri Lankan security forces of widespread human rights violations in the campaign against the LTTE.

Life in The Tamil Areas

o Sri Lanka's military forces occupying Jaffna are regularly interfering with children on their way to school and subject them to interrogation.School-bound children are sometimes singled out at check points and then taken away withoutwithout even the presence of adults they know.

o Tamil parents are angered by the pro-government lectures which are taking precedence over normal education in Jaffna. Government-backed Tamil groups who are already despised by the Tamil population for their collusion with military forces routinely storm into classrooms and try to indoctrinate children at the expense of their studies.

o Cyclists in Jaffna have been ordered by the occupying Sinhala forces to dismount wherever there are army checkpoints in the vicinity. This is a major disruption to civilian life since checkpoints can be found virtually every fifty yards.

o Banana plantations have been banned in Valigamam North in Jaffna, for fear that Tigers could use them as cover to attack government forces. Bananas have been traditionally a major cash crop in the peninsula.

o Police in Trincomalee have been forcing Tamil civilians passing through Thopur to fall on their knees and worship them, because hours earlier six Sri Lankan paramilitary personnel were killed by the LTTE down the same road. In another retaliatory measure police cut food rations to the Tamils in Thopur.

o Sri Lankan police in Trincomalee aimed gunfire at a crowd of Tamils celebrating Tamil New Year at a stadium. Two of the spectators suffered severe injuries with many others sustaining minor injuries.

o Three Tamil fishermen were killed when two Sri Lankan Kfir planes dropped six bombs off the coast of Nachchikudah in the northwest of the island. Four of the bombs landed in the sea, but two were direct hits which caused extensive damage to 20 of a total of 35 fishing boats in the vicinity.

o On 4th May, two M124 helicopter gunships bombed Pulliyankulam hospital and surrounding homes killing at least three civilians The savage airforce assault has left the hospital virtually in ruins and all the medical stocks gutted. The hospital's director Mrs.Thilakavathy Gopalaratnam has sent a plea to the Vanni government agent to relocate the hospital.

o The Tamil homeland's environment is coming under threat due to the thoughtless activities of the military forces. Soldiers have been removing vast amounts of sand and earth in order to erect military installations, such as bunkers, defence embankments and earth walls, resulting in the sea encroaching on to the land in coastal areas.

o Vaddakachchi hospital and surrounding homes lie in ruins after ten days of non-stop shelling by Sri Lankan forces housed at Elephant Pass army camp. The shelling took place during the first week of May. Most of the Tamil residents in the area have fled to join the ranks of hundreds of thousands of fellow Tamils already displaced by Sri Lankan army and air offensives.

Pro-Govt. Tamil group in extortion rackets

The so-called 'democratic' Tamil groups who are making money out of Tamils' misery are involved in corruption on a massive scale in army-occupied parts of Tamil Eelam. Establishing an unholy alliance with the Sri Lankan military, the PLOTE organisation in particular routinely extorts money from ordinary Tamil residents who have been rendered helpless by Sri Lanka's invasion of their homeland. PLOTE's military wing is headed by one Manikkadasan while its overall political chief is Dharmalingam Siddarthan. Their organisation draws a regular income for its collaboration with Sri Lanka's military forces. The military gives them free reign to extort money from long-suffering Tamil residents, even those trapped in detention centrés in Vavuniya. PLOTE cadres in occupied Jaffna, meanwhile, have begun extorting monthly payments from shop-owners. Though the group has slid its way into Sri Lanka's parliament through various political machinations it has no support base in the Tamil homeland and is deeply resented by the Tamil masses.

Cullings from the Colombo Press

Anura Bandaranaike on the LTTE

"My personalview is that as long as the LTTE remains outside the peace process, you cannot have peace. The Tamil parties in Colombo pressing for these peace proposals can't even go north of Vavuniya and they have absolutely no ground support except perhaps, for the TULF. None of the other parties can even get more than 200 votes in Jaffna or the northern province. So what's the use of bringing a peace package if the principal player, the LTTE, is kept out or decides to remain outside ? Therefore, though the peace proposals sound very good, particularly for our foreign friends, it means nothing if the LTTE doesn't get involved in the process. And I don't think the government is very serious about the peace proposals".

- *Interviewed for the Sinhala programme of a Melbourne-based radio, reproduced in SUNDAY LEADER, Colombo.*

Chandrika Bandaranaike on the LTTE

(Interview with Capital Radio)

Q: What about the LTTE, we can't deny that they play a major role in the ethnic conflict

A: Hmm

Q: So are you considering to go anytime for negotiation with them?

A: We will have to discuss sometime with the LTTE but the time and the manner in which we are going to discuss we have already defined. The conditions and the time we will have to decide; when it is time we will start proposing discussion to the LTTE.

Q: O.K... but there is speculation at the moment that theirs is a bad military situation and they will come for negotiatioins in the wake ofv the recent happenings, what is your view ?

A: It is quite true that the LTTE is still willing, but when it is time and if they agree to our condition then we will start working on the problem.

Q: If you find that this is not the time for negotiations rightaway, you are still continuing a strategy of defeating the LTTE militarily ?

A: That will depend on what you mean by defeating.

Q: It is a military strategy ?

A: There is no doubt in that.

Q: What is the military's final goal ? Is it somewhat to defeat them or may be to suppress them to bring them to negotiations

A: Well, there are several ways. IU would say "yes" to all of those and there are many other reasons. As long as the LTTE is fighting us, we will fight them and of course we will fight to defreat them. But you can totally defeat somebody or partially defeat somebody.There are different levels of partialdefeat.....

SUNDAY OBSERVER, Colombo.

Sri Lankan columnist on Minister Kadirgamar

" . . . One allegation is that the Minister wants no other Sri Lankan to hold any high office in the UN for that would jeopardise his chances of securing a high post if the need arises...... It is alleged that he is putting himself before the country.....Kadirgamar is also accused of "cosying" up to India

Kadirgamar is only a fleeting moment in our history only to be a forgotten factor a few years after he ceases to hold office. But if he does not exercise good judgement he could unintentionally no doubt , cause great harm to the country's interests.

"To take stock at the end of two years and eight months, Kadirgamar has done well for himself. He managed to obtain more publicity than any of his elected colleagues. His visibility has been such that people conjecture as to whether he is a prime minister-in-waiting under the present constitution ...

- *"Justinian" in SUNDAY LEADER*

The Tamils in Sri Lanka: When did they arrive ?

If a factually inaccurate statement is repeated often enough, without being challenged, it very soon assumes the mantle of fact. Such is the case with the statement that the Sinhalas arrived in Sri Lanka in 500 BC while the Tamils arrived in the 1300 AD.

As recently as January 1997, the National Geographic claimed, in an article by Priit J Vesilind, on Sri Lanka, that the "Indo-Aryan Sinhalese arrived from northern India around 500BC" and that the "Tamils a Dravidian people, later came from southern India in the 13th century". This statement is repeated by historian ***Adrian Wijemanne*** in his article in ***Hot Spring*** of the same month, where he says "... both sides return to medieval times and go no further - the Sinhalese to their 6th century ***Mahavamsa***, the Tamils to the 13th century kingdom of king ***Sankili***." (incidentally, he should be aware that of the two Sankilis, among the kings of Nallur, the first ruled as ***Segarajasekaran*** in 1519 while the second (the last of the Nallur kings and the last king of the Tamil kingdom) ruled as ***Sankili Kumara*** in 1617).

I am sure neither writer intended to challenge Tamil claims to an earlier presence in Sri Lanka. They probably thought they were merely stating an accepted fact.

I am aware that too many of my fellow Eelam Tamils as well, would also accept such a statement without question, since no one has attempted to set the record straight. There are many Tamils not too sure of their ground on this issue and would rather not get involved in trying to establish the prior presence of their ancestors in, what is today Sri Lanka, without being sure of their facts.

On the other hand, there are quite a few Tamils, who do not think it matters who came to the island first. I am afraid it does! When arguments of bellicose nationalism are used by the Sinhalas to eliminate us as a nation on the grounds of Lebensraum and a claim to prior right to the entire island, contending that we Tamils are only there on sufferance, it is time for every Eelam Tamil to stand up and be counted.

This article is a small contribution towards intellectually arming my fellow Tamils. It is time we put this canard to rest once and for all.

by

Charles Somasundrum

As to when Sri Lanka was first populated, remains vague since there is no written evidence. The mytho-historical Buddhist chronicles like the Dipavamsa, Mahavamsa, and the Culavamsa were the works of biassed Buddhist monks written centuries later, to defend their Sinhala Buddhist interests. These works, apart from being useful as background reading, are of little historical value.

Today, epigraphical; archaeological; linguistic; literary and mythological sources, in addition to the writings of early foreign travellers and such early works as the Geography of the World by Ptolemy, studied against a historical background, have thrown much light on our ancient history.

The word 'Sinhala' does not occur in any of the earliest Brahmi inscriptions. ***Dr S Paranavitarna (Inscriptions of Ceylon _Vol.II p. LXXXIX)*** has a rather lame argument for this. He claims that this name does not occur "for the good reason that as almost everyone in the land was a Sinhalese it was not sufficiently distinctive to refer to a person by that designation".

According to ***Rev. Dr. D J Kanagaratnam (Tamils & Cultural Pluralism in Ancient Ceylon- Chap VI pp 18/19)*** "The names ***'Lanka'*** and ***'Vijaya'*** , though these names acquire tremendous national connotations in later ages, are not found in these earliest inscriptions". He goes on to say that the legends connected with these names were deduced from the Buddhist Jatakas and were used by Buddhist monks composing the ***Dipavamsa*** - not earlier than the 4th century BC and the ***Mahavamsa*** - about the 6th century BC.

According to ***Rev Kanagaratnam (ibid. Chap VII p.21)*** there are four Brahmi inscriptions where the ethnic name ***'Dameda'*** occurs. He believes this is the Parakrit prototype of Demela, Damila and Dravida. He goes on to say "The fact that this ethnic name is used in these inscriptions proves that by the 3rd century BC, the Tamil people had a distinct ethnic and national identity in the southern regions which was clearly articulated."

Rev Kanagaratnam, delving further into the etymology of 'Damela' and 'Sinhela' finds that the 'ela' comes from the Austric languages of pre Aryan times. He says ***(ibid. Chap VI pp. 19/20)*** - "In Mundari 'Elaka' or 'Ilaka' means country. From the Naga word 'il' meaning place the Tamils got the same word. 'Dam' and 'Tam' are from Tamil. 'Then' meaning south. Hence 'Tamila' or Damila' means the language or people of the southern country." He goes on to say "Sri Lanka is still called by the Sinhala people '***Ela Rata***' while the Tamil people call it by a very old name 'Eelam'. **The word 'Eelam' has been used by the Tamils from the time of the Brahmi inscriptions up to now"** *(my emphasis).*

Decade III, Book II, Chap. 1 of Jao de Barros (1515-1526 AD) translated by ***Douglas Ferguson in JRAS (CB) Vol. XX No. 60*** has the following entry "There is moreover current among the natives of the island of *Ceilam (my emphasis),* a traddition that this name is not its proper one, but one given to it by chance; for its ancient name is Illanare or Tranate ". ***Ferguson's*** footnote says "All these varieties of spellings represent Tamil Ilan-Nadu, "the country of Ceylon". He goes on to say further that "Tranate" may stand for Tam. Tiru-Nadu, "the sacred country".

Buddhist ruins at Kantherodai

Before I continue, I must point out that we must bear in mind three main factors that act as catalysts during the formative years of early Tamil presence in what is known today as Sri Lanka. These are, firstly, the contiguity of southern India with Sri Lanka; secondly, the period of Buddhist influence on the Tamils of both southern India and Sri Lanka when Buddhist evangelists converted a large number of mainly Hindu Tamils as evinced by the Buddhist ruins in southern India and north Sri Lanka and thirdly, the friendly relations that existed between the Nagas and the Sinhalas to the extent that they even intermarried freely.

Taking first, ie. the contiguity of southern India and Sri Lanka. Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador at the court of ***Chandra Gupta***, writing around 300 BC, claimed that Taprobane (Sri Lanka) was separated from mainland India by a river. ***Mudaliyar C Rasanayagam (Ancient Jaffna Chap.I p.12)*** surmises that this indicates that, "... during his time, the Indian Peninsula extended further southwards, and that the sea which divided it from Ceylon was so narrow as to be called a river." He goes on to say that since " Megasthenes having, lived and written before the 'deluge' described in the ***Rajavali,*** it can be safely surmised that Kavadapuram and the 49 Tamil lands were engulfed at the same time as the Naga kingdom of Ceylon - viz., during the reign of Kelani Tissa (about 250 BC), The third Tamil Sangam must have been formed at Madura sometime afterwards." Kelani Tissa one must remember, was a Naga king.

Secondly, there was the spread of Buddhism throughout the Southern Indian kingdoms and the Naga Kingdoms of Sri Lanka. *Rasanayagam* says (*ibid. Chap.I pp. 6/7*) that according to the Mahavamsa, The Naga Strongholds in the sixth century BC were at Nagadipa (one must note here that during this period of our history, ' Nagadipa' referred to the entire Jaffna peninsula which was then an island and not connected to the mainland by that thin belt of land) in the north, at Kalyani on the west coast of Ceylon and at Kandam adanam near Ramesvaram. It would appear that a conflict arose between Mahodara reigning at Nagadipa and his nephew Culodara reigning at Kanda madanam for a gem set throne then in Nagadipa. While the two Naga armies were fighting, Buddha is said to have appeared on the scene and settled the dispute and, appropriating the throne, sat on it and preached a sermon on reconciliation. As a result of his sermon, eighty 'kotis' of Nagas are said to have converted to Buddhism. This is said to have been the second visit of the Buddha to the island. Rasanayagam says (ibid. Chap. I p. 7) "The story of the conflict between the Naga kings and the intervention of Buddha as peacemaker is corroborated in every detail by 'Mamimekalai' a Tamil, Buddhist epic, composed about the middle of the second century AD."

Thirdly, the friendly relations that existed between the Naga kingdoms and the Sinhala kingdom. The envoys of Devanampiya Tissa to the court of the Mauryan Emperor Asoka set sail from and returned to, Sambukovalam (to the west of Keerimalai and only 5 miles from Kantarodai) the port built be King Thissai Maluwan in ancient Jaffna (S Arumugam - More Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka Chap.18 p.30). This was also the port where the theri Sanghamitta landed with the branch of the Bo tree and where she was welcomed by King Devanampiya Tissa. Rasanayagam says that the procession with the Bo tree reached the site of the Pacina vihara where it was deposited while the priests and the people were entertained to their morning meal. He goes on to say that the Pacina vihara would have been at ".... Kantarodai, which was reached by the procession at the hour of reflection, as Kantarodai is only four or five miles from the port of Jambukola". The Mahavamsa refers to Sambukovalam as Jambukola. The word 'Sambu' represents Siva as for instance Sambuthurai to the west of Keerimalai so named after the landing of an image of Siva (as claimed by C S Navaratnam in his Short History of Hinduism in Ceylon) while 'Kovalam' literally means a point jutting into the sea eg Kovalam in Karainagar and Kalkovalam in Pt Pedro.

> *"I suggest that the North of Ceylon was a flourishing settlement before Vijaya was born" I concider it as proved that at any rate such was its condition before the commencement of the Chiristian era.*
>
> *- Paul E Pieris*

One should also remember that centuries earlier, Vijaya with his companions, landed not far from Sambukovalam at Keerimalai and was welcomed by the Naga king ruling at Kathiramalai (Kantarodai). All the toing and froing between the kings of Anuradhapura and the Pandyan, Kalinga, Chola kingdoms would have been through the port of Sambukovalam during the reign of the Naga kings of Kadiramalai. As Rasanayagam says (Ancient Jaffna Chap II p. 62) " A great trunk road seems to have been in existence, leading from Jambukola (Sambukovalam) and passing through Kantarodai (Kadiramalai) and running parallel to the present central road to the northern gate of Anuradhapura."

According to the Mahavamsa, the Naga strongholds in the 6th BC were at Nagadipa (which also included the Vanni, Punakari and the Mannar districts) and Kalyani on the west coast. Rasanayagam (Ancient Jaffna Chap.I p. 32) says "....a Naga kingdom existed in north Ceylon continuously from the 6th century BC to the middle of the 3rd century AD. Its capital must have been either Kadiramalai (Kantarodai) in Jaffna or Mantota. ....But judging from the events described in the Mahavamsa and the Manimekalai it is more probable that the capital was at Kadiramalai and that Mantota was only the chief port and seat of commerce..."

The list of kings below taken from the Mahavamsa shows that in the 2nd to 3rd century AD the Nagas of North Ceylon grew powerful enough to become sovereigns of all Ceylon.

1.	Mahallaka Naga or Mahalla Na	135 AD
2.	Bhatika Tissa (son)	141 AD
3.	Kanittha Tissa (brother)	165 AD
4.	Cula Naga or Sulu Na (son)	193 AD
5.	Kuda Naga (brother)	195 AD
6.	Siri Naga I (brother in law)	196 AD
7.	Woharaka Tissa (son)	215 AD
8.	Abhaya Naga (brother)	237 AD
9.	Siri Naga II (nephew)	245 AD
10.	Vijaya (son)	247 AD

Kadiramalai (Kantharodai) from where the Naga kings of the North ruled, is best described in the words of Paul E Pieris (Nagadipa and Buddhist Remains in Jaffna J.R.A.S.(CB)Vol XXVIII No. 12 p. 68) "It will be seen that the village of Kantharodai has no reason to be ashamed of its contribution to our knowledge regarding the ancient history of our island. It stands to reason that a country which is only 30 miles from India which would have been seen by Indian fishermen every morning as they sailed out to catch their fish, would have been occupied as soon as the continent was peopled by men who understood how to sail. I suggest that the North of Ceylon was a flourishing settlement before Vijaya was born. I consider it as proved that at any rate such was its condition before the commencement of the Christian era. (my emphasis)".

(to be continued)

The forgotten suffering of the Tamils

As the list of Tamil casualties grows, the rest of the world turns a blind eye to the actions of the Sri Lankan Government, writes ***Ana Pararajasingham.***

In the past 14 years, Sri Lanka's bloody civil war has claimed thousands of lives. In view of the Sri Lankan Government's inclination to underplay the numbers killed, its reluctant admission recently to a figure of 50,000 deaths underscores the point that this has indeed been a brutal war.

Most of those killed were civilians. In January, the Tamil Tiger rebels said their losses up to the end of last November stood at 9300. The *London Observer* Service has placed a similar number (9800) on the Government side for roughly the same period. If one accepts the Sri Lankan Government's version of 50,000 as accurate, it leaves the civilian toll at a staggering 30,000.

According to the Sri Lankan state controlled *Daily News*, the Tamil Tigers were responsible for the deaths of 3571 civilians, meaning the 26,000-plus remaining civilians killed, were Tamils.

It may be argued that a high toll of Tamil civilians is to be expected given that the theater of war is the Tamil homeland in the northeast of the island. While this argument may well explain the deaths of civilians " caught in the crossfire", this alone can hardly account for the large-scale deaths of Tamil civilians

I believe that Tamil civilians have been singled out as part of a strategy to "beat the Tamils into submission" and that it is this strategy that has resulted in the large number of Tamil civilian deaths.

The Sri Lankan Government's strategy has only served the Tamils cause by driving thousands of young Tamils to join the rebel movement. In 1983, the Tamil Tiger guerrillas not only numbered less than 30 but were poorly armed. The Sri Lankan Government's initial action to cornbat this militancy was to attack the Tamils in the south to show the armed separatists" how vulnerable they are living among the Sinhalese - in short, a blatant attempt to intimidate the Tamils into submission.

As part of this plan, in late July, 1983 Sinhalese mobs went on a rampage, burning, looting and terrorising the occupants of Tamil homes in Colombo arid the surrounding suburbs. The Government line was that this was a spontaneous backlash by Sinhalese people to the killing of 13 Sinhalese soliders in the North by Tamil guerrillas. The carnage claimed the lives of 3000 Tamils.

In March 1984, a fact-finding mission headed by Mr Paul Sieghart of the International Commission of Jurists concluded that the attack was a deliberate act executed "in accordance with a concerted plan, conceived and organised well in advance".

Throughout its war against the Tamil rebels, the Sri Lankan Government has targeted Tamil civilians in the belief that the Tamils could be terrorised into submission. As part of its strategy, the Sri Lankan Government has, as it matter of routine, indiscriminately bombed and shelled densely populated Tamil areas. On 9 June, 1986, Time magazine reported reported how the arbitrary bombing of Jaffna by the right-wing Jayawardene Government had only served to increase Tamil Support for the guerrillas.

Four years latter, in June 1990, the Government, pursuing the same policy, introduced an economic embargo to deprive the north of the island of fuel, electricity, and medicine while continuing with its military onslaught. This economic embargo is still in force and continues to contribute to Tamil civilian deaths through a lack of medicines, malnutrition and other hardships on the very young and the very old.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga's incongruously named broad strategy of "war for peace" is really a much harsher version of the same policy.

The truth is that the international community as a whole has chosen to simply ignore the situation, often preferring to accept the Sri Lankan Government's version of events. Consequently atrocities on Tamils even when confirmed by independent sources and backed by video clippings, have been ignored!

It is time that the rest of the world recognised that it is Sri Lanka's deeply flawed strategy of beating the Tamils into submission is prolonging the war. Other nations should persuade the Sir Lankan Government to give up its military options and seek a negotiated solution. **The danger is that the lack of action by other nations may be construed by the Sri Lankan authorities as a carte blanche for its actions - actions that have begun to assume genocidal proportions considering that Tamil civilian deaths are now in the tens of thousands.**

(Ana Pararajasingam is editor of The Tamil Monitor , Australia)

Two Nations and one Country or one Nation and two countries

By

Surendra Ajith Rupesinghe

Historical Retrogression

In the '50s , before he had degenerated into open class collaboration and chauvinism, the late Colvin R de Silva warned **"Two languages one nation or one language and two nations"**. Now, today, after many decades, due to the reactionary arrogance and repressive policies of the State, carried out by every successive government, we face the equation; "two nations and one country or one nation and two countries".

All honest people will surely agree that it is these policies of the State and of every successive government that has precipitated this crisis and the civil war and the corresponding development of the demand for a separate state based on the right of national self-determination.

Historical Antecedents

The LTTE did not just jump out of the blue one fine day and demand a separate state. In fact, they were not even the first to demand a separate state. The resolution in favour of a separate state was adopted in 1976 at the TULF conference held in Vaddukoddai.

This demand was precipitated by the utterly senseless killing of seven participants at the conference of the International Association of Tamil Research held in 1974 in Jaffna, by the Sri Lankan security forces (SLFP - led coalition government).

The major historical causes for the civil war and for the demand for a separate state may be identified as follows:

*** The Sinhala Only language policy (SLFP/UNP).**

*** The sabotage of the Bandaranaiake-Chelvanayakam Pact (UNP).**

*** The abrogation of the BC Pact (SLFP).**

*** Anti Tamil Pogroms (under the SLFP government).**

*** Deployment of security forces to the north under emergency regulations to crush the non-violent Satyagraha campaign (SLFP).**

*** The "Masala Vadai" communal campaign and sabotage of the Dudley-Chelvanayakam Pact (SLFP).**

*** The Republican Constitution and Standardisation (SLFP Coalition).**

*** The killing of seven participants at the International Association of Tamil Research Conference (1974 - SLFP Coalition).**

*** Post-election communal violence (1977 - UNP).**

*** The open fraud of District Development Council elections in Jaffna and the rampage by security forces and UNP thugs resulting in the burning of the Jaffna Library (UNP).**

*** Black July and the worst Pogrom against the Tamils which included the bludgeoning to death of 52 Tamil political prisoners while in 'maximum security' custody of the state (UNP).**

*** The Indo-Lanka Accord and the introduction of Indian Occupation forces; the sacrifice of national sovereignty to Indian hegemony and the subsequent war between the LTTE and the IPKF.**

*** Occupation of Jaffna and the desecration of Martyrs' graves (PA).**

There have followed four attempts at a negotiated settlement which have failed due, fundamentally, to the inability of the state to address the issue of Tamil national self-determination.

The Forging of the Modern Tamil Nation and the Demand for a Separate State:

The modern Tamil nation has been forged in the blood and the sacrifice of the Tamil people. Genocidal massacres and torture; rape and abuse; terror and intimidation; the raining down of bombs and shells; repeated anti-Tamil Pogroms and repeated deceit and deception are what resulted in the modern Tamil nation and the consequent demand for a Separate state.

“....sacrifice of national sovereignty to Indian hegemony”

The modern Tamil nation has its origins as a historically constituted, distinct community of people who have had a common economy; religion; language and culture nourished within a definite territorial context. This modern nation has been forged in the force of arms as has been the case with nations like China; Algeria; Palestine; Viet-Nam; Laos; Kampuchea; South Africa; Eritrea; Morocco and so on throughout the world.

There have followed four attempts at a negotiated settlement which have all failed, due fundamentally, to the inability of the State to address the issue of Tamil national self-determination.

Breakdown of the Last Round of Negotiations

The last round of negotiations ended when the LTTE resumed hostilities by attacking military targets as a sign of protest against the method and substance of the negotiations. This was based on their perception that the negotiations were being set up as a concerted plan by the Sri Lankan and Indian governments to entrap them.

They point to the procrastination over the lifting of the security restrictions and the economic embargo; the intransigence over the Pooneryn issue; the question of the right of self-defence in the East; the vacillations over the upgrading of the temporary cessation of hostilities to a permanent cease-fire; the demand for the extradition of Pirabakaran by India and finally, belligerent statements by the President issued after her return from India, which pre-empted the possibilities of any more "concessions". These developments were seen as a mounting threat to the LTTE who issued two ultimatums and only then resumed hostilities.

The government claims that the LTTE was making too many demands and was using the lull during the negotiations to prepare for war.

The fact remains that the negotiations did not follow any particular plan or structure but were left to the foibles of the government's negotiators. There was no attempt to establish parity of status between the negotiating parties.

Full-Scale War. Whose Agenda is it ?

On account of these irreconcilable and mutually exclusive perceptions, negotiations broke down and, along with the occupation of Jaffna, full scale civil war has resumed.

It would seem that the responsible thing to have done would have been to insist on resuming negotiations - after some controlled and limited military response - and to have insisted on a proper structure or plan of negotiation so that such negotiations could proceed without breaking down even though there could and would be disagreement over specific issues. Instead, the government, spurred on by India and other international powers have gone for the kill. Why ?

Whose agenda is it ? The civil war is being fuelled not only by the PA leadership and the 'cowboy' generals but also by international and regional powers who are desperately contending and colluding to carve out strategic leverage in Sri Lanka and throughout the Indian Ocean region.

The UNP too, is fuelling the war by its support of the military agenda of the government. The war is also being fuelled by chauvinist forces such as the MEP and the JVP and of course, the jingoists who inhabit the lunatic fringe of society.

So once again, the country is being held to ransom and is being brought to the very brink of disaster by the very same ruling class which created and precipitated this crisis in the first place.

Resistance to the Demand for a Separate State

It is often argued that the Sinhalese

people cannot and will not permit the country to be divided by accepting Tamil nationhood and the status of a separate state.

But the quintessential question is, who is dividing the country? Who is continuing to perpetrate this crisis ? Who is driving the Tamil people to seek security and dignity and to preserve themselves as a historically constituted nationzx? Who is trying to bomb them out of existence ?

The fact is that the LTTE has repeatedly and publicly stated that they would settle for a viable alternative of a separate state within a united (federated) Sri Lanka.

If the prevailing political system cannot address the issue, it is not due to the intransigence of the LTTE but the degree of communalisation of politics brought about by the state itself ie. The SLFP and the UNP and their opportunistic parliamentary cohorts

"Conquest" of Jaffna

Character of the LTTE

The LTTE is a bourgeois political force which grew out of a petit bourgeois social base. As a bourgeois force, it does not have a line or vision of liberating the masses from the rule of Capital. Instead, it uses the masses as passive support for the armed struggle and as bargaining chips at the negotiating table. The LTTE, in fact, wishes to become yet another neocolonial ruling class.

Due to its narrow nationalist vision and line, the LTTE adopts the politics of terror directed against the civilian population as well. This has to be condemned since it has no place in any liberation movement. Yet, these policies are also a reaction to the policy of state terrorism and genocide.

However, in waging a national struggle, the LTTE has proven to be the most consistent and intransigent force which has fought not only the armies of the Sri Lankan state but of India as well. It is this independence that India and the imperialist powers find unacceptable. Their agenda is to tame the Tiger by crushing it militarily and to somehow legitimise the defunct Southern-based Tamil parties and mercenary groups who can be better relied upon to represent their strategic interests in the region.

The LTTE has been singled out only because it represents - if even in a distorted form - the national democratic aspirations of the Tamil people. What this means is that no sustainable political settlement will ever be possible without addressing the issue of self determination and direct negotiation with the LTTE.

The Policy of the PA Government

The policy of "Peace through War" of the PA government is based on perverse logic.

Does anyone seriously believe that the Tamil people can be separated from the LTTE by bombing and shelling them out of existence; by torturing and raping their citizens; by permitting literally hundreds of thousands of civilians to languish in sub-human conditions in make-shift refugee camps, all of which crimes are kept secret by a de facto censorship ?

Whatever contradictions the Tamil people have with the LTTE, they are of one mind that without the LTTE, they would be back to square one. So lets put aside all these jingoistic charades and face the equation - two nations one country or one nation and two countries.

Unite to End the War and Achieve a Sustainable Peace Through a Negotiated Political Settlement

The democratic citizens of Sri Lanka must unite as one people in order to avert this horrible plunge into barbarism that the civil war represents, and demand an end to the war and a negotiated settlement.

Both the SLFP and the UNP must make a joint public declaration as to their commitment to working together to achieve a negotiated political settlement; to address the national democratic aspirations of the Tamil people and, together, to set up consultation with the LTTE as a way of working towards consensus on basic principles, parameters and modalities of negotiation.

This is the only way to save the country from mutual slaughter and to achieve a united Sri Lanka. If they fail to do so, the people will judge both these parties as unfit for political representation since they would be responsible for perpetuating a most destructive civil war and for horrible crimes committed against the people, resulting in the ruin of our country.

Dear Ambassador Burleigh,

An open letter to U.S. ambassador Peter Burleigh

By S. De Silva

Your Excellency,

I know, Sir, you have a busy schedule but unfortunately what I must say cannot wait. I also ask forgiveness for using an example you may regard (at first) distasteful, though I'm sure you'll appreciate its necessity when I've finished.

An alien from Mars lands on earth and sees a distressing situation - the rape of a woman by a man. The alien at first does not appreciate what is actually taking place (but we can forgive him since he has just arrived from another planet). What he sees is two people fighting.

Yourself an objective observer of the Sri Lankan conflict I imagine what you also see is two parties fighting.

The natural tendency of 'outsiders' stumbling upon conflict is to judge the warring parties by what they do. That is of course understandable. In other words, the two sides' observable behaviour becomes the moral terrain of the conflict and we confine our condemnations to this terrain. We condemn this action, we applaud that action. The LTTE is condemned for blowing up the central bank the government might be praised for setting up another human rights commission. Confining moral judgments to observable actions is what could be termed surface-morality (though that is not to demean it).

But surface-morality also has grave limitations because it conceals more fundamental moral territory which lies beneath outward appearances. To see how profound this point is we have to go back to the rapist.

What does our alien see? Two people fighting. Let's say he is a very benevolent alien and wants to solve the conflict. He might apply surface-morality and tackle their various 'behaviours'. If he takes this approach he may (ironically) find himself scolding the woman most, for she is scratching and tearing away while the man is merely trying to hold her still. "Hey you, lady, please stop that and try to come to some sort of compromise," our alien shouts. The rapist agrees with the alien - "Yes," he says to the woman, "why won't you listen and compromise like the alien says?"

What this example shows us is the danger of restricting moral outrage to particular 'behaviours', even though one may mean well. For, in a rape scenario, it is not enough to ask the woman to stop lashing out, or even to ask the man to stop hurting her. You have to also get the man off her and away from her for good.

How valid is this 'rape' analogy to the Sri Lankan conflict? I say it is accurate down to every last detail. Empirically, 100,000 Sinhala troops are now roaming around the northeast (in lots of exclusively Tamil areas) bombing, killing, burning rice crops, starving Tamils, locking them up en masse, and denying them medical relief. These are Sinhala troops and their victims are Tamil people, hundreds of thousands of Tamil people. I think that could reasonably be compared to rape of one nation by another. If not, I dare anyone to tell me what more is required that would constitute the rape of one nation by another.

Then there's history - a modest estimate would be that around 30,000 Tamil civilians have been killed by Sri Lankan (Sinhala) state forces since Sri Lankan 'independence'. When an established state kills so many members of an ethnic group who are not essentially in control of the government and military (on their own traditional lands) it is again quite valid I think to draw a 'rape' analogy.

But to avoid number-disputes, I want to bring out an even more potent aspect of the rape analogy. It is regarding the motivation behind each's will to fight.

The Sri Lankan government - like the rapist - is endeavouring to assert conquest over its adversary.

The LTTE - like the rape victim - is aiming to secure freedom from its adversary.

There is a very real moral difference between these two ambitions (freedom and conquest) and that is where my rape-analogy really holds.

Think it through. LTTE fighters are not trying to 'take over' land on which Sinhala people have been rooted for centuries. It is Sinhala troops who are trying to 'take over' land on which Tamil people have been rooted for centuries. So while one side is trying to take over, the other side is aiming to not be taken over. Isn't it obvious, then, which of these is the more moral, the more noble, of these two war aims?

(continued)

So, while our immediate senses tell us both are attacking each other, at a deeper, more subtle level, it emerges that one is attacking while the other is under attack.

Of course, the outward appearance is of 'fighting'. But if we limit our moral outrage to the outward manifestations of fighting, we miss the whole moral crux of it - i.e., what has driven these two forces into battle in the first place. We miss that one group is trying to conquer the other, while the other is trying to avoid being conquered. Shouldn't we extend our moral outrage to this fundamental matter?

We can readily appreciate this in other conflict situations, especially where our own nation is directly involved. However, our sad tendency is to apply morality selectively. When Hitler's army was going around trying to conquer the world we had no trouble seeing the deeper moral issue. I do not believe that during WWII we confined our moral judgments to the 'atrocities' committed by both sides. On the contrary, we (rightly) pointed to the moral difference between fighting to conquer and fighting to resist conquest. There is a clear distinction and we all know it.

So we can - empirically, historically and motivationally - characterise the Sri Lankan state as a rapist.

But what would that depiction make the Western nations who endlessly supply money to it? It would stand them in a specific relationship to that rapist. Not that this is what is intended, but one might compare a man standing by the rapist providing him with food to rebuild his resources so he can carry on longer. Meanwhile, as for the woman being raped, her determination to break free from the rapist's grip only hardens and her actions become more violent to the point where moral outrage from a whole variety of the rapists' 'friends' matters less and less to her (sound familiar?). I believe, therefore, that by aiding Sri Lanka, one is not remaining ethnically neutral. One is (effectively) backing one nation in its historical attempt to conquer another

I am a Sinhalese man disgusted by my nation's thirst to conquer another nation (there must have been a handful of Germans who felt the same way about the Third Reich but couldn't stop the madness). I am appalled at how we continue to use LTTE 'atrocities' as an excuse to justify conquest of the Tamil nation, which we have been pursuing relentlessly since 'independence'. Behind all the sophistry of devolution packages and carefully polished terminology, conquest is what this is all about. If Sri Lanka were truly willing to let the Tamil people decide their own fate (i.e., if they were "liberating" and not "conquering" Tamils) they would by now have explicitly indicated such a willingness. How? By proposing a referendum for the Tamils to decide their own fate. But even during peace talks Tamil 'freedom' didn't enter into the terminology once - instead the government dithered and delayed in preparation for the 'final assault' to conquer the northeast, Tamils' ancient lands cultivated independently by them for centuries before the arrival of European colonisers.

"Conquest is what this is all about"

If the Sri Lankan government were even today motivated by a desire to 'free' the Tamils it would not so staunchly resist the notion of third party mediation. It resists a third party only because it knows Tamils have an air-tight case for the right of self-determination, which the international community will instantly recognise once the fighting stops. That is what is reall behind all this sophistry. What els explains the glaring contradiction tha in order to 'liberate' Tamils th Chandrika-administration is resortin to the severest ever destruction of the livelihood and ability to survive? Thin about it - the severest ever. That contradiction alone should send alarn bells ringing wildly. Liberation-via-crippling?

Of course, to the internationa community the government dresse up its war-aims in an attractiv cloak, the cloak of precious Sr Lankan unity. But consider - is thi something essentially noble? Grantec the very word 'unity' seems to conjur such glorious imagery it is tempting t think even hard-line Sinhala extremist are essentially virtuous people. Bu 'unity' like the word 'democracy' i being abused. Is it democracy (or noble form of unity) when nation of Eelam Tamils is grafte onto a (bigger) Sinhala natio and thereby transformed instantly into an ethnic minority withou political power? That is no democracy, that's hegemony. I is like forcefully grafting Franc onto America and then championing the cause of US-Franc unity as something virtuous. I d not think the French woul appreciate that sort of unity ver much, especially when electio time comes around and none o their national aspirations eve see fruition. Of course, you coul declare the new state of 'America France' a glorious new-style democracy, and you could send US troop there to ensure that none of those 'French terrorists' tried to spread thei 'racist separatism' around the place.

Well, then what is the actual difference between that sort of unity - whic both you and I can readily denounc as immoral - and the sort of unity the Sri Lankan state has in mind an which it has killed 30,000 Tamils (an still counting) to preserve?

The only difference is that Tami Eelam never received formal recognition by the international communit (unlike France). This is, quite simply due to an accident of history. As you know, Britain combined our two separate nations into one and granted independence as though this was one distinct entity. After much abuse of power by Sinhala politicians who inevitably dominated parliament Tamils naturally demanded back their historical right to independence in the territories in which they have lived for centuries. This is not, and never was, an unreasonable or immoral demand. Yet this is precisely what all Sri Lankan governments have jealously tried to forestall. The condemnation of the Tigers, therefore, and the emergence of an insulting package falling short of even national recognition should not surprise us in the least. It is totally consistent with the persistent denial of Tamil national rights by the Sinhala state since 'independence'. At every stage, Tamil demands for self-determination (even during its peaceful stages) have been vigorously thwarted by some ruse or other. Today that ruse is the package. How noble is that? The truth is, it was immoral for Sinhalese to oppose Tamil independence when it first emerged and it remains immoral for us to oppose it now. The denial of freedom to a nation is immoral *perse.*

So you see, the rallying cry of Sri Lankan 'unity' has become a convenient cover for the Sinhala political establishment to try and acquire the entire land-mass of the island for the Sinhalese and obscure Tamil national integrity once and for all. This process of assimilation has been so subtly pursued over the last 40 years that today any outsider begins to get confused to the point of impotence. Meanwhile, Sinhala 'intellectuals' consistently work to portray the LTTE's fight for independence as some sort of fanatical ideological (and racist) craving. But it is none of those things. It is a matter of only three things which I'm sure yourself (as an American) can readily respect - national integrity, national dignity, and national security.

Horrific events since 'independence' have proven beyond reasonable doubt that the security of Tamils can only be ensured by the creation of a strong Tamil army which can stand up to the conquering ambitions of the Sri Lankan (Sinhala) state, which has not only thwarted true democracy at every turn, but actively launched attacks on Tamils in Colombo as well as the north. **Any nation will form an army when it is under threat from another nation, that's an immutable law of history. The LTTE is the Tamil army.** That is why I cannot raise my finger at the LTTE, no matter what it does and no matter how much I am repulsed by violence of any kind. You cannot raise your finger to a rape-victim - it is futile as well as insulting. What you can (and must) do is keep pointing your finger at the perpetrator of the rape and try and pull him away from his perverse determination - in this instance pull him out of the victim's house and let her breathe freely.

"The deafening echo of bombs terrorising small Tamil children..."

This was one bomb that failed to go off.

Having met certain members of the LTTE leadership here in London, I know for a fact that they are not the crass or immoral people Sri Lanka tries to portray. They are people burdened with the imperative of freedom and driven to extremes by the unrelenting lust of the Sinhala state to conquer the Tamil nation. They are reluctantly engaged in a war that has been forced upon their people who need self-determination for their basic survival, never mind all the other relevant issues like national dignity and political independence. So, the acts which the LTTE commits to secure the Tamil nation's safety from advancing Sinhala troops cannot be condemned in isolation from the reality that they are facing a direct physical assault upon their own territory by a superior military force that grossly outnumbers them.

But to appreciate the true extent of this fear takes a genuine willingness to get into the shoes of the nation which is facing this physical threat from a foreign army. It takes a great deal of effort to muster up such identification and empathy on behalf of another nation. As a Sinhalese person this has been no easy task. It should be easier for a total outsider. It has been a trauma, nothing less, for me to face up to what we have been doing and are doing to the Tamil nation in the name of Sri Lankan unity. I have had to confront my own racism and reckon with the fact that our whole post-independence history has been one of trying to assimilate the Tamil nation against its will. But I don't think any of our Sri Lankan politicians are of a type which takes to mustering such effort to empathise with the situation Tamils are facing. Even as half a million Tamils face starvation, the airforce flies over their villages with the thunder of fighter planes and the deafening echo of bombs effortlessly terrorising small Tamil children who I can picture now, not understanding why this is being done to them by strange foreigners with some perverse notion of 'unity'.

Racism, I'm sure you know, plagues all societies. It is an immensely powerful force which at its crudest orders troops to do this to another nation and at its subtlest tolerates it indefinitely. Anyone in Sinhala society either ordering this or tolerating this is to my mind a racist whether he is conscious of his racism or not. Any outsider tolerating this (I have to say) is in danger of losing sight of his own morality, or is conveniently stepping around it. That is why I am of the opinion that foreign observers of this conflict need to urgently re-formulate their position on the Sri Lankan issue, and perhaps in more ways than one.

THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE

I know the diplomatic community has for a long time been fed the impression that the LTTE is some sort of fanatical organisation with a cultish following and no political maturity. This is a magnificent lie. In my experiences with senior LTTE members I am utterly convinced that they are essentially decent and noble people who happen to be historically burdened with the need for freedom. In areas under their control, they have already put in place the essential ingredients of political administration and display an admirable concern for many social and ecological issues. Their commitments to these issues are genuine and I can honestly say their thinking is far ahead of the narrow-minded Sinhala political establishment, who can routinely be seen playing political games at the expense of the whole population.

If Western nations were to properly study this, they would notice the considerable economic potential of a free Tamil Eelam state. If they went further and cultivated links with Tamil Eelam from here on, I have no doubt there would be substantial rewards. It only takes serious reflection to see that the will for independence cannot be crushed by military force (every historical example proves this) so is it not wiser and more pragmatic to start establishing cordial links with a state that is (in all but international recognition) already a reality? I think the only obstacle to that is the widespread misperception that the LTTE leadership is somehow 'fundamentalist' or fanatical. It is not. It is quite aware of global economic reality and the need to integrate into the international economy. Indeed, the Tamil independence movement already has behind it the support of all layers of the Tamil Diaspora who are extremely well adjusted to modern global economic reality. They are eagerly waiting to play their role in building bridges between Tamil Eelam and the rest of the world.

Which is to say - a future Tamil Eelam state would not in any way jeopardise US interests in the region. On the contrary, if the US (or any other Western nation) were to step in in support of Tamil Eelam's right to exist, the bonanza in terms of investment opportunities would not be inconsiderable. After the tremendous suffering the Tamil nation has undergone its potential to develop rapidly into a successful Asian economy is very real and western nations could quite easily tap this potential early instead of wasting time supporting a fast-collapsing Sri Lankan state which is becoming crippled under the weight of its war-expenditure, corruption and mounting political instability.

"...Clever racists, sophisticated bullies..."

Indeed, I can confidently predict that the Tamil nation would be so relieved and grateful for any final intervention on the part of the US or other powerful nations to help deliver Tamil Eelam - and would consider it an act of such magnanimity - that Tamil Eelam would in principle open its gates wide to foreign investment and development opportunities. Knowing something of LTTE leaders and their mind-sets, they do not have ulterior Marxist agendas,

and given their strong nexus with tl
Tamil population they could quite ea
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around economically-friendly policie

Which begs the question, why re
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results? As soon as you stop providir
money so readily its war-effort is ove
It has to accept any kind of solutic
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possible. Of course, the fear might l
that if Eelam came about Sri Lanl
may turn its back on the West. B
that's not realistic either. Indeed, whe
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people see how capital could be s
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they would soon learn to be more tha
happy to live in a neighbourly wa
alongside the state of Tamil Eelan
The ordinary Sinhalese are not so ver
omous as the racists in power tryir
persistently to stir them up for politic
reasons. Sinhalese people woul
come to terms with Tamil Eelam grac
ually, especially as they come t
realise it is in their own interests to c
so.

I believe Tamil Eelam would pos
less than half the problems (especia
ly corruption) which foreign busines
currently faces when dealing in th
present Sri Lankan context. The LTT
leadership happens to be a truly nobl
and dignified layer of people with ver
progressive views on many matters
they have literally helped over th

years to transform Tamil society from a somewhat caste-ridden, arguably sexist and superstitious community into a society that will be able to relate constructively with the Western world when it is finally allowed to be free. Of course, the notion that Sinhala racist elements have consistently tried to portray - of the LTTE being a fanatical, fundamentalist-type outfit - has been cultivated chiefly to scare away foreign support. However, an independent Tamil state in the northeast would (in my honest opinion) be a forward-looking country able to relate well to the rest of the world, and willing to do so.

THE POLITICAL IMPERATIVE

In the context of escalating strikes in the south (which only the Sri Lankan media can amazingly de-link from the war) there is little prospect of peace on the industrial front. However, given the political traditions of the country - where there have been two major Marxist uprisings - there is a strong likelihood that such trends could re-emerge as desperation sets in. This will render Sri Lanka even more unstable politically.

Already you must be gazing in horror at the political violence that has swept the country. We Sinhalese have to settle these problems (due to a rotten political culture) ourselves and I'm sure that if the war ends it would help us rediscover our potential to develop gracefully within the Sinhala part of the island. But while the war continues, these problems are set to get worse, as paranoia, insecurity and industrial unrest become the order of the day.

Which makes me wonder whether you have put your eggs in the wrong basket - backing the wrong horse so to speak. For myself, I am confident that it will take the recognition of Tamil Eelam before the Sinhalese can realise their own potential instead of being led by their worst instincts of conquest and racism towards Tamils (however well-concealed these impulses are).

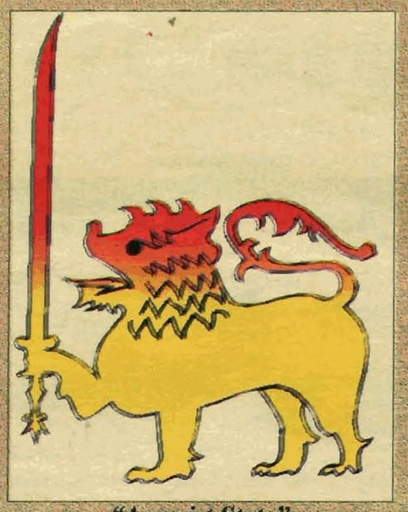
THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

How many times (I wonder) have you heard Sinhala 'intellectuals' alleging there is no Tamil nation?

I put it to you that for a Sinhalese to assert that there is "no Tamil nation" is as absurd as Europeans insisting that there is no American nation.

It begs the question, can your 'American-ness' ever be a matter for anyone else to decide? I can visualise what your reaction might be - "What! Someone telling me there's no such thing as an American nation!"

If that is your reaction then it means you do understand nationhood, nationhood stripped of the sophistry of the likes of our dear 'clever' professor Peiris, our Sinhala historians and our so-called intellectuals. They don't seem to realise that no amount of clever terminology stands a chance in hell of wiping out Tamil national identity because it exists in people's hearts. All that's left for us to do as Sinhalese (and Americans) is recognise it.



"A rapist State"

Indeed, once you strip away all the sophistry, you see the likes of Peiris, Kumaratunga and Ratwatte for what they are - nothing but clever racists, sophisticated bullies, pursuing conquest by any-means-necessary, even if that means a superficially 'radical' package. I wish I could contain my disgust but I cannot any longer. How many words can they think of to block recognition of the real (and, yes, beautiful) Eelam Tamil nation that deserves more than anything to be recognised and freed? How many 'packages' can they devise, how many ruses can they muster to get more money from the World Bank and America to accomplish the historical mission that short-sighted racists before them set in motion?

What you perhaps don't see, Sir, are the private winks and nods - the signals these people are giving to their own hard-liners... "Don't worry guys... trust us, we know what we're doing.... we'll be the ones to conquer the Tamils... With this package, the whole world has rallied to our side..." In this respect, this government's approach to the ethnic issue does not mark a deviation from the Sinhala racist trend of governments past. It is rather the most sophisticated manifestation yet - a crystallisation - of that trend. The package is the best cover possible for the forced assimilation (failing that, genocide) of the Tamils. The package buys time, that's its function.

And tragically Sir, it appears the whole world has rallied to Sri Lanka's side blinded by the package. And my heart will go on bleeding for that, not that I expect that to make a difference. One thing I have recognised is that it is only the strong hearts and bravery of those Tamil boys and girls who have picked up guns to defend their families from Sinhala troops that will bring freedom to the Tamils in the last resort. **For, even if all the western nations gang up on the Tamils militarily, you still wouldn't break their will.** Still another girl will tell her sister, "You wait akka, I'll stop them coming," and if she dies, then her younger sister will say the same thing to her family... and on and on it will go.... (notwithstanding the western human rights group which will step in to condemn the recruitment of children).

To these Tamil men, women and children there really is a world out there that's ganged up on them, either staying agonisingly 'neutral' or giving money to hasten their worst nightmare

- their homeland streaming with the khaki attire of Sinhala troops. We can only appreciate their fear if we genuinely imagine how it would feel if our own homeland (let us say America) was occupied by a foreign army that has already killed tens of thousands of our people. Yet we are always selective when it comes to national liberation. If it's our nation that's under foreign occupation it's the most patently obvious thing in the world and by definition unacceptable. If it's others', well... we can take it or leave it... after all, there are so many confusing dimensions to it!.

Well I have had enough of it. And I'll tell you who I'm with. I am with that girl who's told her sister she's going to join the LTTE. Categorically I am with her. I am not with the devious architects of the package and other ruses, not with the grim and shameless Sri Lankan media who are playing their part obediently - if you look beneath the surface, they're doing just what they need to to make Sri Lanka seem like a tolerant open society, just to keep the international community happy and the money flowing in. That too is part of the Sinhala facade. They've worked long and hard at it. They've discovered that the best way to conquer the Tamils is to play the game properly, make a screen, use words the Westerners go crazy for. It is amazing how a nation can rally behind the thirst for conquest. Hitler must have been pleasantly surprised by that fact too. But luckily, those resisting conquest can always fight longer and win in the end- as Hitler also discovered and the Sinhala nation will eventually discover.

"Tamil Eelam exists in their hearts, in the dances of their children, is their spirits, in their Music..."

All I can ask of you is, when you next go to your annual meeting with the State Department, that you consider for a moment what's really going on behind this fabulous mask the Sinhala establishment is wearing - this fabulous 'devolution package' of a mask.

Apart from being a cover to pulverise the Tamil homeland for longer, I'll tell you what else is wrong with the package (supposing you believe it arises from genuine compassion for the Tamils). It approaches Tamil national identity as if it were a political 'ideology' that people can be weaned away from. One can only grasp the stupidity of such a notion when one transposes the scenario to one's own nation. Imagine the Russians occupying America and then trying to wean Americans away from their sense of American nationhood. Imagine that in order to quell Americans' desire for independence, they propose a Russian-formulated devolution package which would give Americans limited autonomy and restricted self-governing powers (though of course Russia reserves the right to dissolve the American province by Russian presidential decree). Sounds less appealing now doesn't it? Not only less appealing, it is downright insulting. So too it should seem in the Sri Lankan context.

Mr Burleigh, I urge you - when yc
are in the West again - please attend
Tamil Eelam cultural event. I recon
mend visiting their National Heroe
Day celebrations in any of the majc
Western capitals. I did, all on my ow
It was an eye-opener. Tens of thou
sands of Tamils gathered to raise th
Tamil Eelam national flag in sombr
silence. I saw them with my own eye
- honest - and there were no LTT
guns at their backs either - believe m
I looked. Here, in the West, where the
have the freedom to express the
identity safely, Tamil Eelam exists i
their hearts, in the dances of their chi
dren, in their spirits, in the
music, in their entire pres
ence. That is when I realise
this is not a fanatical ideolc
gy that you might equate wit
something like Islamic funda
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intellectual/ religious cor
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Fascism. This is nationa
affinity - genuine and raw -
basic existential truth, fror
which dawns the natural an
irrepressible urge to liv
freely as a nation in one'
own ancestral homeland. S
does it surprise you that the
fighters sacrifice themselve
today so future generation
of Eelam Tamils can live fre
from fear of the Sinhala mil
tary, protected eternally by
dedicated Tamil army dete
mined to see the back of th
last Sinhala soldier leavin
their homeland? Think of th
importance of that as an American, Si
and what you would do for your coun
try if it was under occupation by arme
men belonging to another natio
rounding-up, arresting and bombin
your people.

It does not matter how many peo
ple from the Sinhala nation - my ow
Sinhala nation - tell you that Tamils ar
not a nation (and engage you in a his
torical debate about the matter) or sa
that the LTTE is a fanatical terroris
movement. **Tamil nationhood is**
fact that cannot be bombed out o

existence. It is a reality that must be recognised, accepted and, yes, celebrated. For I cannot call it virtuous to send an army of our men so we can rule over a nation that asked for its independence democratically in 1977. I cannot call it virtuous to triumphantly raise the Sinhala lion-flag in Tamil Eelam's historic Jaffna city - an unforgivable insult that my nation will have to endure guilt and shame for for decades to come.

ON THE QUESTION OF GENOCIDE

Of course genocide sounds far-fetched and alarmist when looked at superficially. We see President Kumaratunga, we look at Minister Kadirgamar, and we observe our dear mild-mannered professor Peiris, and we seem to have an educated bunch don't we? They know the lingo, and they all come across as very reasonable fellows, don't they? Not the sort who'd engage in genocide. But appearances are misleading. Look at what they're doing. They've banned journalists from the war-zone. They're allowing the burning of rice fields, they're permitting diseases to break out among the Tamil population like wild-fire. We can only thank our lucky stars, your Excellency, that you or I were not born a Tamil there. Thank the Lord that none of our relatives are holed up in refugee camps being left to starve and become crippled with illness.

"Does it surprise you that their fighters sacrifice themselves today so future generations of Eelam Tamils can live free from the fear of the Sinhala military...?"

Sinhala society has been expertly silenced. Mention Tamils' right to independence and you're a terrorist. A culture of fear cynically envelops the population. Even the humane among the Sinhalese who would otherwise oppose such a callous military strategy are kept blissfully ignorant and afraid to question. The media, of course, does an ace job of concealing the dearkening reality of the northern skies from its own population, notwithstanding the token dose of concern about press-muzzling to convince you guys in the embassies that Sinhala racism is officially dead (they do it so marvelously it makes me cry). But do they inform the Sinhalese of the daily round-ups, the public beatings, the abductions, the blood-soaked bodies of Tamil girls floating to Mullaitivu's shores in army sacks? Why should they? It's their last chance to rule the Tamils, if they just hold their breath and keep the stench of death at bay a little while longer they might get what their racist hearts desire. Why rock the boat, in the eleventh hour?

Sir, just one more thing before I go (I have already taken too much of your time). I met a Tamil girl recently. She writes to me by e-mail from Canada. Wonderful she is. Her heart is like gold, that's the only way I can describe it. The sort of girl which humanity is lucky to be blessed with. I wish you could meet her. Would it surprise you that she wishes she'd stayed in Eelam and joined the LTTE? If an American girl says that about joining the US military, a tear of national pride might even collect in your eye. I had to stop and appreciate that longing of hers. But in the end I said to her, I'm glad you didn't join... you might have been killed by Sinhala troops. After a pause (a tear came to my own eye) I knew it is not possible for me to stop helping to liberate her nation, you know why? Because I can't live with the thought that more girls like her are right now facing my Sinhala army. So how can I rest until I know our armed forces are miles and miles away from the homes of the Eelam Tamil nation? How can I stop until I know there is not going to be another gang-rape and murder of an innocent Tamil girl by our Sinhala troops prowling the northeast? Because each of those incidents, Sir, weighs heavy - too heavy - on my conscience. How can I rest until I know that no more Tamils are being disappeared for wanting to live separately from us (and can I dare blame them)? History will judge us all in the end, and while I cannot ever relieve my guilt as a Sinhala person, I can try and purge some of the pain by hastening the freedom of the Tamil nation while I am alive.

So that, Sir, is how you became a part of my life. I know that you are one of the people who can make a difference to this nightmare. I can only hope that somehow this lands on your lap, and that for one fleeting moment, it touches your humanity amidst all the other important diplomatic concerns that must occupy your thoughts. I hope for one moment you acknowledge that Sri Lanka's war is unwinnable as well as immoral, that it is neither in the Tamil interest, Sinhala interest nor even America's interest. I also hope you notice that Tamil Eelam is a fully-evolved national society, not a half-baked political ideal.

I hope this recognition stops us watching and waiting for the results of this government's strategy, because the results are already plain and agonising enough. The longer we wait, the longer the government has to continue, because their will (I know) won't fade of its own. It doesn't matter to them that Tamil children are living in daily dread of our army, or that the prisons are filling up with innocent Tamils some of whom will perhaps never see the light of day again. But we wait... and we tolerate... For what it's worth, **Sir, I think we humans are best judged by how much we're willing to tolerate. It only frightens me to see just how much we're willing to tolerate these days.**

Yours respectfully,

S. De Silva

Batticaloa
Cameos
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Gods & Goddesses, Folk Drama & Firewalking

Notes on Paduvankarai: by American Cultural anthropologist

Patricia Lawrence

The following excerpt is drawn from the writings of Patricia Lawrence, an American cultural anthropologist whose research in Batticaloa district spanned the years 1991 through 1996.

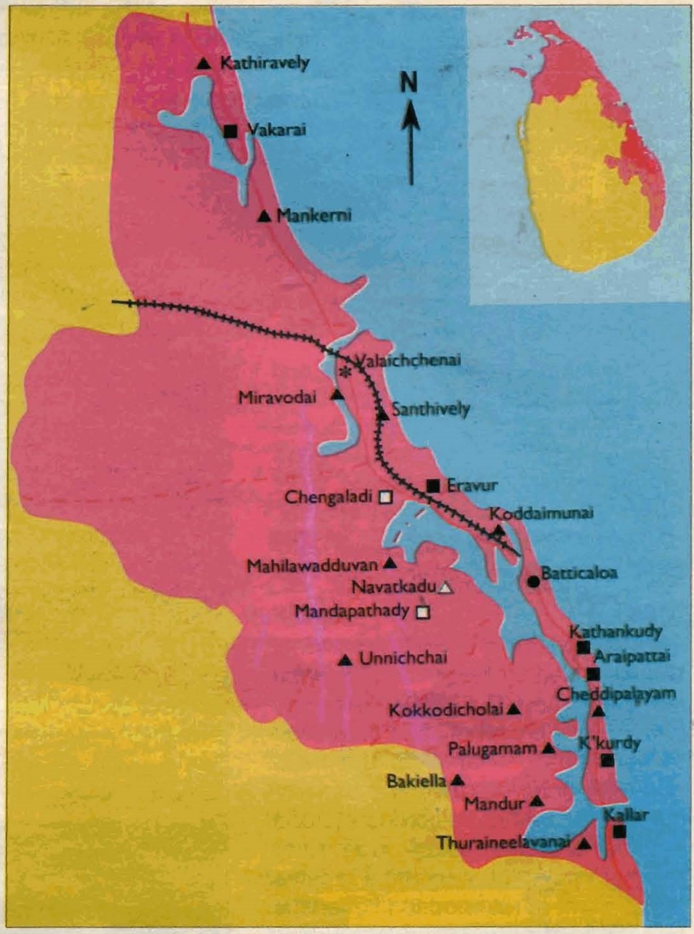
In the paddy-cultivating village of Palugamam, which is located in the western area of Batticaloa District known as Paduvankarai, there is an annual firewalking ceremony at the Tiropataiyamman temple. After the firewalking a folk drama (natukoothu) performance drawn from the Mahabarata usually begiins at about midnight and continues through the night. The makeup and costumes are lavish. Most of the village attends this dramatic performance, but a decade ago the people from many other hamlets and villages would also gather in Palugamam for this event. In today's war-ravaged landscape and history of displacement, the collective gathering is noticeably smaller. People bring mats to the temple in the evening, placing them edge-to-edge on the sandy area in front of the stage. The children soon fall sleep draped upon one another or against the adults. The last performance I attended in Palugamam was *Kumbakarnan Vathai*; with its theme of just and unjust warriors. The drama began with a moment of silence to honour a much respected master who died a year earlier. The most superb actor in the drama happened to be this master's eldest son, who had been released from interrogation in the Batticaloa prison just two weeks earlier. **During the performance, the Special Task Forces patrolled the periphery of those who had gathered to watch the folk drama. As we watched the enactment of a war within the war, the enemy on stage and the enemy in the Special Task Forces patrol circling the temple grounds seemed to mirror one another.**

It was the start of the main rain-fed paddy farming season,maripoham, and the activities of the Special Task Forces had been stepped-up in the area where I was presently living. The sandy village paths were wet from rain and nevvs vvas afoot that six fighters from local families had died in the Yal Devi army operation in the north. People were disturbed, and when I haphazardly asked what the purpose of a banana fiber string of margosa leaves and yellow flowers over one of the house entrances symbolized, my friends responded to this question with enthusiasm. My question served as a temporary form of entertainment amidst the tedium of war that afternoon. As they led me to the best local source for an answer through the winding pathways of wet sand and puddles of water, I thought we would be drenched before we reached the right house. Just as the rain came pouring furiously down, we ducked through a gate and under a long veranda with satinwood pillars. I was introduced to a stately retired teacher who spoke clearly enunciated Tamil, and then told to take a seat for my explanation of a household ritual fondly referred to as *chakkarai ponkal* ("milk rice sweetened with jaggery"). As tea was served, I learned that her great grandmother was Sankupathi, the original patron of the village's Kannakiyamman temple, constructed next to the larger and centuries-older Tiropataiyamman temple. Sanku pathi's matriclan was Vaittiyanar kuti.

She began, once a year every year every house in the village holds the *chakkarai ponkal* ritual for the Amman in the shrine room, and then a "house protection" ceremony for Vairavar in the household compound. With a tone of deeper significance, she added that if this annual ceremony is not observed, the Amman will appear in dreams.

The first step of the annual household ritual is to wash the household shrine room with "chanted water" and then install a kumbam (a decorated brass vessel of water representing the deity) at the shrine. The "first paddy" of the harvest is placed in front of the the household goddess, who is Mariyamman in this house. A yantram is drawn on the new rice with a piece of margosa wood (from the trunk of the tree). Mantrams are uttered over a bunch of margosa leaves. Margosa (veppamaram) is considered sacred to the Amman. It is "her tree".[1] The kumbam, with cotton string representing veins of the body wrapped around it, is placed on the rice. Betel leaf, an areca nut, a banana, a coin and flowers are placed into the brass pot with both hands. Margosa leaves are placed into the pot and a coconut is fitted into the neck, with the ends of the margosa leaves forming a circle around the cocount. Incense is burned. With a "good heart" the non-Brahmin priest (pusari) then calls the Amman to come into the brass vessel. The sign of the presence of the Amman is the trembling of the margosa leaves and of the vessel, which has, at that point, become a kumbam embodying the goddess.

There are some steps which have already taken place prior to the start of the puja in the household shrine: Three young "virgin girls" (kanni penkal) around the age of ten have been selected by the mother of the house. One would be the mother's brother's daughter, plus any two girls the the family is fond of -- there isn't a condition that they must be family relations. The teacher recalled that when she was a young girl, she was asked to participate in the home of her mother's younger sister and the home of her father's sister.



In the month of *Vaikasi*, *Avani*, or *Aippasi*, the woman of the house goes to the houses of the three chosen girls to ask humbly for newly harvested rice in a gesture of begging with the end of her sari cloth. As she enacts this stage of the ritual, the mother says, "In the name of Mariyamman give alms in the cloth" The mothers of these small girls pour rice from an ola leaf box into the sari cloth as she holds it open.

At the auspicious time, the three girls are led to the house wearing white saris. At the threshold, the mother washes their feet with turmeric water, sprinkles turmeric water over their heads, and marks their foreheads with sacred ash and sandal paste. A small black smudge of charcoal from coconut oil is placed on the side of their noses, and margosa leaves are placed in their hair.

When the three girls are seated in the household shrine room banana leaves are placed before them. One coconut spoon serving of sweet milk rice (*chakkarai ponkal*) is placed before the Amman, and then each girl receives three servings. The mother of the house then humbly begs for a small amount of the milk rice for Mariyamman, holding out a banana leaf. After placing that offering on the shrine, the mother will say, "You are hungry. Please excuse this small mistake. Eat, Mother." With this gesture, which recognizes the children as one with the Amman, the mother of the house closes the door while the meal is eaten by the girls and the Amman.

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[1] The margosa tree, and especially its leaf, is considered "cooling." Wherever the Amman's presence is evoked margosa is usualty also in evidence. Amman oracles carry margosa leaves or have the leaves tucked around their waistline. The section of the house designated for the household shrine is often constructecd of margosa wood in Batticaloa. There is in Batticaloa a popular divination ritual known as villukuri which employs the use of a margosa wood bow. On one occation I documened villukuri as a nighttime ritual, conductecl at 3:()() a.m., in a household where an unidentified corpse had been found. It was performed in conjunction with other elaborate healing rituals and also a ritual known as valavu kaval ("compound protectection"). The main purpose in this case was to ascertain any untoward effects upon the family members, and finaly, to purify and protect the household. Villukuri, however, is versatile -- on other occasions when I observed and participated in the ritual it was used to form a connection with family members who were "disappeared" or living abroad in the diaspora.

Afterwards, the mother enters and gives additional servings of milk rice to the girls, which they will carry home. Leading the girls to the house compound threshold, the mother asks three times in the village dialect, "Poriyalo?" (You are going?) -- and the girls leave, going straight to their homes.[2]

After pouring a small brass vessel of water used by the girls on the sand inside the gate, the mother feels she has brought prosperity and protection to her house. That night the male guardian deity Vairavar will be worshipped in the house compound and devotional songs will be sung. After the night puja, the neighbors receive pirachatam, or returned food offerings blessed by the deities.

I thanked the teacher for explaining the household ritual so patiently. She showed me the household shrine room. I asked whether she had held the annual ritual in her home yet, and she replied that Mariyamman was coming to her in dreams and asking why she hadn't performed it -- and she explained that her son must first be returned to her, and only then will she perform the household ritual.

The rain had stopped by the time we quietly walked home through the sandy lanes past the banana fiber string of margosa leaves and yellow flowers which had sparked my question. **My friends said that the teacher's son had been shot two years earlier by the Sri Lankan Special Task Force. She was one of many people I had encountered there bearing unresolved grief of a son lost in the war. We had passed the afternoon discussing in detail one of the village's favorite household rituals, but about the loss of her son, which was at the heart of the terror people lived with day-to-day, we could not speak without establishing deeper trust. In Paduvankarai, I repeatedly faced situations where it was beyond our grasp to create ground on which we could acknowledge with dignity the injury that had to be endured.**

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[2] This household ritual shares similarities with rituals enacted at many Batticaloa Amman temples. In temple ritual, the kannimar or kannipillai are girls who live within the goddess territory (ur) who are "caught" by the teyvam dancers to perform duties of service for the goddess inside the temple during the days and nights of her propitiation. They are required to remain on the temple premises during the days of their service therefore they sleep and eat at the temple as well. Their primary duties include waving of lamps and receiving a ritually cooked meal of "cooling" foods, which is eaten inside the temple. As the kannipillai eat this meal, they represent the goddess herself and are treated with utmost respect and care. This ritual is said to be most important for the protection and well-being of the ur If it is not properly enacted, local people believe death and destruction will come to their area. These have been enacted every year of the war, except in 1990, when the fighting was so intense people could not move about.

Vasantha Raja's book launched in Malaysia

The Tamil version of Vasantha Raja's book "Tamil Exodus and beyond" tranlated by Shankara Moorthy was launched in Kualalumpur, Malaysia on 13th April under the auspices of the World Tamil Relief Fund. President of the Tamil Writers' Union, Aathikumanan chaired the function.

Tributes were paid to Vasantharaja by several speakers who included C.Pasupathy, Dr.Dagmar Rajanayagam, R.Thirumavalavan, and "Aruvi" Editor Arunasalam. Tributes were also paid to former head of BBC's "Tamil Osai", Shankara Moorthy who translated the book.

A sum of 15,000 Malaysian Dollars was realised from donors at the meeting, which money will be sent to the Tamil Rahabilitation Organisation for refugee welfare in northeast in Sri Lanka.

Labour Candidates Support Eelam Tamils Right of Self-Determination

They were at it again ! The 'Dirty Tricks Department' of the Sinhala expatriate community in London. Fresh from their temporary success, in twisting the arm of the Rector of Imperial College into cancelling the hall booking for the TEEDOR Symposium, they tried their hand again.

This time, it was to cancel (at the last minute) the hall booking of Tylers Hall of Kingsbury High School (Lower) off Stag Lane in Kingsbury. The Hall had been booked for Saturday 12 April for the Tamil New Year celebrations, organised by the local constituency associations which comprised the Associations of Tamils - Brent North - convenor R Jeyathevan; Tamil Welfare Union - Brent South convenor - K M Satkunam; Tamil Welfare Association - Hendon - convenor M Sivarajah; and the Tamil Associations of Harrow East and West.

In the event, the Sinhalas scored an own goal ! The organisers, led by Jeyathevan, with their customary efficiency, booked an alternate hall and managed to contact all the speakers and most of the invitees within 24 hours. Everyone lent a hand in getting the hall ready. There were seniors, professional and young people, ready to lend a hand in sweeping, dusting the chairs and arranging the stage. While the young men responsible for the sound system and the cameras went ahead with their quiet efficiency the ladies laid out the food and drinks with the minimum of fuss. The Hall was packed. The news of the Sinhala attempt at disruption had spread and Tamils who had not planned to attend earlier, had decided to attend.

(From our correspondent)

Also present, were the Labour candidates for Harrow West - **Gareth Thomas**; Harrow East - **Cllr. Tony Mc Nulty**; Brent South - **Paul Boateng**; Brent North - **Barry Gardiner**; Hendon - **Andrew Dismore**; Islington - **Jeremy Corbyn** (who, though not from one of the local constituencies, had been invited as an old friend of the Tamils) and MEP **Robert Evans**. (The Tamil community had earlier, met the Conservative candidates for Harrow West - Robert Hughes and Harrow East - Hugh Dykes, in the previous week, at Rayners Lane, at a meeting organised by the Harrow West and East constituency associations.) The meeting was chaired by Ivan Pedropillai and co chaired by Paramalingam (a lawyer, actively involved in Eelam Tamil issues). Also accommodated on the platform, along with the candidates and Robert Evans was Vasantha Rajah (former head of Sri Lanka's Rupavahini).

The evening's programme began with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp - the kuthuvilaku - by the Labour MEP Robert Evans. This was followed by an Eelam dance beautifully choreographed and well rehearsed by a bevy of charming young girls, trained by Dr (Mrs) Vijayambigai Indrakumar whose husband, read, towards the end of the proceedings, a short verse, in Tamil, that he had composed that evening, encapsulating the spirit of the moment.

Most of the parliamentary candidates spoke strongly, about the attempt to disrupt the meeting and decried the Sinhala attempt to import their communalism and discrimination into Britain. They stressed that they would support the Tamil right of self determination. Barry Gardiner in particular, addressed himself to the young people present and told them the story of Robert the Bruce and the battle of

Beside Mr. Robert Evans is lawyer Paramalingam

Bannockburn. He said that in the same way that Robert the Bruce won the battle at the 7th attempt, after watching a spider trying to build its web, the Tamils of Eelam were sure to see success in their fight for independence.

Vasantha Rajah's contribution was an extremely effective and forceful speech. Chairman Ivan Pedropillai said, at the end of this speech, that he hoped that Tamil community and its friends would have the opportunity to read it in printed form before long.

The proceedings ended with a violin recital by Srimathi Gnanaambihai Pathmasegamany who was accompanied on the miruthangam by Thiru Sithambaranathan. A contribution of Mel Issai by Gold Star concluded the proceedings.

THE NEW LABOUR GOVT. & TAMIL ASPIRATIONS

Vasantha Raja's speech

Mr Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen - As we've just heard from our Chairman, some 'Sri Lankan government agents' have tried their hardest to try and disrupt this meeting. They know that today Labour politicians will hear a side of the story which Sri Lanka does not want them to hear. I hope this slight inconvenience to our meeting has helped at least to open the eyes of those present. If this is the level of intimidation the Sri Lankan government is willing to employ against Tamils living in Western countries, the Labour politicians here can get a good idea of the extent of harassment that must be faced by Tamils in Sri Lanka itself.

Having said this, the heavy-handed tactics used by the Sri Lankan government should not surprise us anymore. Sri Lankan government propagandists in the West seem to be getting desperate because their lies are gradually being exposed before the world. I am pleased to announce that at the current meeting of the UN Commission for Human Rights in Geneva, an unprecedented 53 NGOs have just condemned Sri Lanka's war in the Northeast. Not only have they condemned it, they have actually called for the withdrawl of Sinhala troops from the Tamil homeland.

These 53 NGOs include the respected World Council of Curches and the International Commission of Jurists. Amnesty International also has just condemned the government's human rights abuses in strong terms refering to over 600 'disappearances' in the North of Sri Lanka within the past year. This is a heartening signal that international observers are finally beginning to realise the truth - that Sri Lanka's war is not against terrorism (as the government has tried to portray it). It is a war against the Tamil nation of the North & East.

What better time for international opinion to change than the Tamil New Year. Today, with hundreds of thousands of Tamils going through unspeakable sufferings in their homeland, this is an opportune time for expatriate Tamils to highlight the plight of their people to fellow human beings and governments in their host countries.

We are lucky that the Labour parliamentarians who have been kind enough to attend this meeting have an excellent track record of being highly principled human beings sensitive to the sufferings of oppressed people. Therefore, I am sure they will turn a genuine and listening ear to the things we have to say.

I have always admired the Labour movement in Britain as the embodiment of some of the most important values mankind has developed in history. In spite of the Labour party's ups and downs and vacillations during its evolution, I firmly believe the Labour party is still the natural home for many wonderful human beings who understand, relate to and remain sensitive about the problems and rights of oppressed people all over the earth, irrespective of nationality, colour or creed.

At a time when - too often - 'profit' and 'power' have become the main political motivations, the Labour party in Britain - the creation of the most progressive sections within the first industrial working class in the world - still produces politicians who recognise injustice when they see it, and are willing to use all their political skill and energy to fight against it.

Therefore, it is with great hope and expectation that hundreds of thousands of suffering Tamils would turn to the Labour party when it forms the new government on May Day. Indeed, how fitting if the first political party of the industrial working class should come to power on the very day dedicated to the international working class.

But, unfortunately, May Day may not be a happy day for the Tamils in Tamil Eelam who are facing a Sinhala army which is bombing, murdering and crippling their people. The government's invasion of the Tamil homeland is being enacted in the midst of a ban on reporting from the conflict areas, and under the grotesque pretence that the Tamil people are being liberated.

It was widely reported, recently, that the Conservative foreign minister, Mr. Rifkind and his Junior Minister Dr. Liam Fox successfully persuaded Sri Lanka's Opposition party (UNP) to cooperate with the Colombo government in a fresh effort to restart negotiations with the LTTE, with Britain playing the role of facilitator. It is increasingly becoming clear, however, the Rifkind initiative is aimed at helping the government to carry out its two-pronged strategy to crush the LTTE, rather than promoting new talks with the LTTE.

Now, whatever the true motives behind this Tory initiative are, there are some positive aspects to it. Most importantly, it has generated a momentum in Sri Lanka and abroad towards promoting fresh negotiations between the government and the LTTE, with Third Party mediation.

I have no doubt a Labour government would carry that momentum forward by pressurising the Sinhala government to come forward for direct talks with the LTTE.

Britain certainly has a historical right - if not a historical obligation to undertake this task of pressurising Sri Lanka. And no other government on earth - not even India - can raise any reasonable objections to Britain's involvement.

But it is important I make it clear today that Britain - our colonial ruler only 50 years ago - is directly, and I emphasise DIRECTLY, responsible for the plight of the Tamil people today.

Therefore, Britain has not only a political obligation but a MORAL obligation to intervene and do everything possible to protect the rights and security of the Tamil nation. Above all, Britain must help to restore the Tamil nation's democratic right to self-determination, and that includes their right to secession and to full independence.

No other colonial ruler of the island imposed a unitary state upon the two nations living there - only Britain did. They did so because it was convenient for administration of the island.

But when you unify two separate nations - where one is smaller in numbers - and then you leave in place a parliamentary system - where most MPs are going to always be overwhelmingly Sinhalese - what you get is rule by one nation over another. In certain Third World countries where chauvinist sentiments are still very strong such a unitary set-up leads to much abuse of smaller nations by bigger nations.

This is precisely the situation we have in Sri Lanka. We have two nations and a parliamentary system which renders one of those nations - the Tamil nation - powerless.

That is not democracy at all. It is foreign rule . . .

This momentum to convert Tamils from a nation into an ethnic minority has been remarkably successful. Today many people (especially outsiders) hold the view that Tamils are settlers in an essentially Sinhala country, instead of being a fully-fledged nation in its own right. In order to achieve the conversion of Tamils into an ethnic minority, Sinhala governments have engaged in the most dreadful and criminal ofactivities. They have implemented extremely brutal schemes of Sinhala colonisation within the Tamil homeland, chasing away Tamils from their traditional homes and planting Sinhala villages in their place. Successive governments have also deprived the Tamil homeland of capital investment sothat all educated and ambitious Tamils have been compelled to migrate toColombo and other Sinhala areas. Then in 1956, the current President's father, Mr. SWRD Bandaranaiake, passed the Sinhala Only Act forcing Tamils to learn Sinhalese for their economic survival. It is important to see that this has all been part of the historical momentum of the Sinhala state whose mission is to dilute and assimilate Tamils so that Tamil national integrity is gradually obscured . . . .

What we have today - with the

All six participants win their seats

Paul Boateng (Brent East)

Cllr. Tony Mc Nulty(Harrow East)

Garth Thomas (Harrow West)

Andrew Dismore (Hendon)

Barry Gardiner (Brent North)

Jeremy Corbin (Islington)

Chandrika administration - is without doubt the most brutal manifestation yet of the Sinhala nation's determination to stop Tamil Eelam gaining freedom. What we see are tens of thousands of Sinhala troops prowling around the Tamil homeland, harassing, raping and butchering the people and wiping out their means of survival. Indiscriminately the forces are shelling innocent Tamil villages. Mercilessly they are burning rice crops and destroying trees, and deliberately upsetting the ecology of the Tamil homeland. Without a second thought they have made homeless hundreds of thousands of ordinary Tamil people. They ban food and medicine to Tamil areas, they obstruct the work of relief agencies, and they round up entire Tamil villages and subject the people to regular humiliating and terrifying ordeals. And yet they tell the world they are liberating the Tamils.

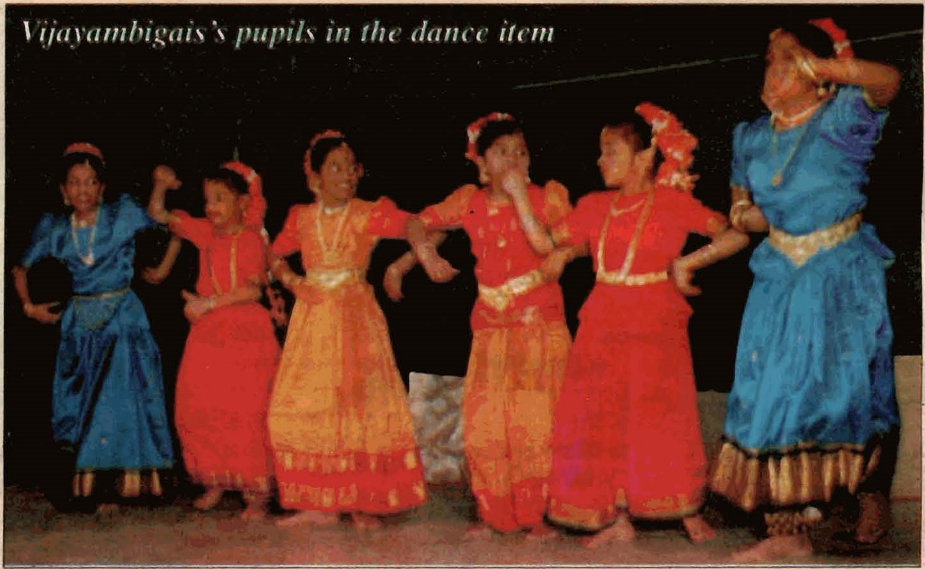
Violin recital by Gnanambihai Pathmasegamany

In view of the ground reality, and in view of this brutal history, I for one would be surprised if the Tamils would agree to the government's Devolution Package as a solution to their problems. And why should they? The powers 'granted' by the package are even less-substantial than (may I say)"an English Parish Council".

Tamil national consciousness has developed way beyond the scope of the devolution package. Indeed, Tamils are not waiting to be 'handed' anything by the Sinhala state. What they want is national recognition and to be left alone to decide their own future as an independent nation.

Let me just say that if, since the formation of the United Kingdom, the Scottish people here in Britain had to suffer a tiny fraction of what the Tamil people have had to suffer under Sinhala rule, then the United Kingdom would have broken up a long time ago. And could you ever imagine an English army being sent to aerial-bomb Scottish towns and villages because the Scots wanted independence? Or imagine the Canadian government sending in English-Canadian troops to launch mortars and impose starvation on Quebecois, because the French-speaking nation there voted to separate.

After such dreadful experiences over the past fourteen years, it is insulting to expect the Tamil nation to settle for anything that entails Sinhala domination of a single central government. What Tamils want and are entitled to is full political independence. Every nation has an inalienable right to rule itself. I think the Sinhala side will have to start preparing for that eventuality right now if they are keen to achieve peace and prosperity for their own Sinhala homeland, and if the Sinhala government wants to avoid major military disasters in the future. Some respected political analysts in the Sinhala South have clearly seen the increasing vulnerability of the occupying Sinhala forces in the Tamil homeland. They have ridiculed the government's up-beat interpretation of the so-called military successes. And I totally agree with them. Therefore, I repeat, it would be in the Sinhala government's interests to withdraw its troops, restart negotiations and determine ways of recognising Tamil sovereignty.


Vijayambigais's pupils in the dance item

THE WHITE PAPER ON THE DRAFT PEACE PROPOSALS

"Despite opposition from a thousand quarters, the only solution to the ethnic problem is a federal system providing for full regional autonomy" declared S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in a speech he delivered in Jaffna in 1926 and also in an article he wrote in the Morning Leader the same year.

" A federal system is the best solution to the North-east problem". J.R.Jeyawardena said in an interview to the Sunday Times on 6th January, 1995.

Long before he came to power, Bandaranaike observed that federalism is the only solution to the ethnic problem. J.R.Jeyawardena came to the conclusion that federalism is the best solution, after retiring from the office of president which he held for a long time.

The problem is that the federal solution, which they advocate when they are not in office, is ignored when they are in offices Ceylon's tragic history lies in the gap between what the Sinhala leaders advocate when they are not in office and what they do when they are in power.

In this respect, the Sinhala leadership shows that it is hydra-headed, or rather two-headed; this becomes very evident when one compares their precepts and their practice.

The Sinhala leaders promise the Sun and the Moon to the Tamil voters. But theses pledges soon evaporate into outer space as rapidly as they were made.

It is now obvious that Chandrika, while hiding her head ostrich- like in the sand, is spreading out the wings of a white dove. It is natural that one likes to know beforehand where this white dove will end up.

In 1965 the UNP entered into a pact with the Federal Party to set up District Councils. The agreement only resulted in the publication of a White Paper on District Councils in 1967. Similarly its more than likely that Chandrika's peace plan will not get beyond the Select Committee stage. Lets examine this more closely.

BY

M. Thirunavukarasu

1. The August 1995 peace proposals revealed that Chandrika had considerably gone back from the election pledges she had earlier made.

2. The Draft Peace proposals she has put forward now betray that she has gone back to a large extent from and abandoned key provisions embodied in the third August 1995 peace proposals.

3. Two thousand bhikkus, including the Maha Nayake Theros of the three Nikayas, met recently at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall and rejected Chandrika's draft proposals. Moreover Madurawewa Sobitha Thero used the occasion to ask "what are the grievances of the Tamils?" A shocking question indeed at this stage of this crisis!

4.The chairman of the Select Committee, Minister G.L Peries has recently assured the Mahanayakes "The Tamils will not be given anything not sanctioned by the Maha Sangha."

5. UNP leader Ranil Wickrame singhe has categorically rejected the fundamental rights of the Tamils and has explicitly stated that the UNP would be moving several amendments to the draft proposals at the appropriate stage.

6. The DUNLF (Lalith faction), which is a constituent of the ruling People's Alliance, has expressed several objections to the draft proposals and has made known its intention of moving several amendments. When the select committee took up for consideration the four elements of the Draft Proposals on which there was deemed to be consensus, the DUNLF (Lalith faction) proposed that the Regional Governors, instead of being appointed on the recommendation of the Chief Minister, should be appointed at the President's. The DUNLF (Lalith faction)also proposed that the number of ministers in the Regional Cabinet should be less than the six specified in the draft proposals.

If this is the fate of two out of the four elements on which there is deemed to be consensus, then one doesn't need to say anything more about the fate of the other proposals. Therefore it doesn't seem likely at all that these proposals in their entirety will be transformed into a bill. Hence the Comparison of these Draft Proposals with the White Paper on District Councils submitted to Parliament by the UNP in 1967 is opposite.

The then UNP government after having assured the Federal Party that it would table the District Councils Bill in Parliament, did not proceed any further than the publication of a White Paper on the subject. Under the Soulbury Constitution, a two-thirds majority in Parliament was not needed to place the District councils Bill in the statute Book or to introduce a federal form of government. Even though the UNP and the Federal Party together had an absolute majority in parliment, the UNP chose not to pass beyond the stage of submitting a White Paper on District Councils.

If that be the case, then it is not possible for Chandrika to table a Bill in Parliament to amend the present constitution, without a two-thirds majority as is constitutionally required.

When recently, a resolution expressing support for the draft proposals was moved in the Southern Provincial Council, the UNP members walked out without voting on the resolution. Therefore it is crystal clear that when these Draft Proposals are tabled in Parliament in the form of a Bill, and a vote is to be taken, the UNP will stage a walk-out. It is impossible to obtain the requisite two-thirds majority without the UNP's votes. No ruling party will like to table a Bill which is unlikely to be passed in parliament. The present Draft Proposals are half baked. If even these half baked proposals have to be further whittled down to suit the wishes of the DUNLF(Lalith faction) the UNP and the Maha Sangha, and even if a Bill finally emerges, the solution provided will be a highly controversial one, as Chandrika is well aware.

Hundreds of Buddhist monks from across the country converge on Colombo's Bandaranaike Conference Hall to protest against the Devolution proposals

From the foregoing, one can but conclude that Chandrika will eventually decide not to go beyond the submission of a White Paper. That is why Chandrika has set no time frame for the select committee's deliberations. Four and a half years can be spent pleasantly jaw-jawing, with delicious snacks and tea. One can but pity the poor chairs and table.

Tamil Cultural evening in Zurich

The Zurich branch of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Switzerland held a cultural programme on 30 March '97 in aid of medical relief for Tamil refugees in northeast Sri Lanka. The programme was organised by the Women's wing of the branch.

Picture shows the final scene in a dance drama presented by the LTTE's Arts and Cultural unit in Germany, functioning under the guidance of the dance teacher, Mrs. Savithri Emmanuel.

Born in England, but I am an Eelam Tamil

says Kothai

The persecution of Tamils is nothing new for us. Throughout history, throughout the world we have been attacked, our culture ripped apart and degraded, our people enslaved, raped and killed. We have had others rewrite our history with false words. We have been forced to act against our own interests, destroying ourselves under the command of those who took power over us using brutality and greed. We have been a people targetted for destruction by different forces time and time again. And we survived.

But this time in history we can be proud that we did more than survive. In Sri Lanka we have to our name the most militant, skillful, revolutionary freedom fighters in the world. It is this, when I have a moment to contemplate it, that makes me cry. How many oppressed people of the world are lucky enough to have such a powerful movement fighting for their survival? A movement that will never turn off course in betrayal. It is this deepest expression of humanity that reaches me from across the other side of the world, and brings my tears flowing. I am so proud that I am a Tamil now, and that my Tamil sisters and brothers are fighting for me, for all of us, to create a place we can call ours, to create Eelam.

It has taken me more than three decades to destroy the effects of colonisation on my mind, so that I can be free to be proud of being Tamil. I am an Eelam Tamil woman, and I was born and grew up in England, and like everyone else here, I was fed lies about my people. I was not allowed to speak my language, and I had no contact with Tamils except for my mother, father and brother, all of whom were as equally colonised as myself and who tried to make me be more British than the British.

When I finally made the break with English society and went to India in search of my heritage, I was shocked at how much I had been duped. I discovered so many things that seem so ordinary to most Tamils, but are a delight for me who had been used to a harsh, loveless and ignorant existence in England. I now remain convinced that the humanity and wisdom of Tamil society holds the key to ending the terrible rigid system of exploitation, persecution and destruction that we see everywhere around us in the world.

"... I am so proud ... that my Tamil sisters and brothers are fighting for me..."

We have come from the oldest recorded civilization and our language is the only ancient living language. To me this means that Tamil culture contains the wisdom of many, many centuries of development, pieces of which today's Tamil people carry with ease as common general knowledge. For example, it is obvious to me that the environmental awareness, only just now developing in the West, never left Tamil consciousness from the beginning (and this is why the Tamil understanding and agenda on the environment is far better prioritised). Tamil people have a unique way of analysing and valuing life and relationships that has kept our humanity alive despite the atrocities committed against us. We have developed the sharpest sense of justice, the deepest love and caring for others' pain, and the most persistent desire to support each other, that has preserved a meaningful community. In addition to that our knowledge of all the sciences and the development and use of human intelligence is superb.

What we have lacked for some time is a place where our knowledge, culture and society can develop without further attack, degradation and destruction. We are still reeling from the blows that Brahmin, Aryan and British colonisations have inflicted. We still have the scars of believing fairer skin is superior, that Western knowledge is the only knowledge, that puffed-up university degrees from colonial institutions are valuable, that competing with the West is a worthwhile pursuit. How do we heal those scars when we have no place of safety? How do we rediscover wisdom we forgot and develop further wisdom when we have no place of safety?

Safety to grow and flourish is a basic human need. We are following the most fundamental and fiercest natural human instinct by fighting for Eelam, that of self-preservation. And because our heritage belongs to all human society, every loss for Tamil society is a deep loss for the world.

Every diaspora Tamil holds deep in her or his heart the need for Eelam, a place to call home, a place where we belong, a place where we do not need to prove that we have a right to exist. A place where we can enjoy our humanity, keeping it moving forward and upward our way.

That is the first reason why I believe we need Eelam. The second reason is much more straightforward and urgent. The fundamentalist Sinhalese state has proved itself time and again totally incapable of acting responsibly towards Tamil people. That irresponsibility has cost, and is costing, many, many thousands of lives. On that basis alone it has proved itself completely unworthy of the role of governing in Tamil areas (indeed of governing in any part of Sri Lanka). Eelam is an absolute necessity in the current situation. By absolute I mean that accepting anything less than Eelam would be mass suicide and completely contrary to our humanity.

International agencies and governments who put their attention on 'sovereignty' as some absurd reason for 'peace' talks, that are calculated in advance to allow the Sinhalese state to remain in charge, have missed the point (probably deliberately). The point is that Tamil people's sovereignty has been invaded and abused. Furthermore peace is only peace if it means an end to persecution. There is no peace for the oppressed in accepting conditions of dictatorship and persecution. Real peace means liberation, so peace and Eelam have to go hand in hand...and so it remains with Tamils to keep fighting until our sovereignty is protected and we have peace. In the meantime Sri Lankan Tamil society is revolutionising, women and young people are powerful like they never were before, and leadership is for those who can think and act well, not those with colonial styled degrees or caste status. It is up to us in the diaspora to catch up in lessons on humanity so that our current backwardness does not adversely affect progress for Tamils and the founding of Eelam.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST STATE TERRORISM IN SRI LANKA

CASTIS, Church of the Ascension, Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester, M15 5AL

CATAMARAN

Once this boat
was two separate hulls,
till sea-faring men
from the other side of the world
put them together,
bound them up with rope,
used them to draw
the wealth of the sea for themselves.
And this went on for many years,
the two halves secretly wishing
for their separate freedom, .
dreaming of riding the waves,
each completely on their own.
So when at last
the pale-skinned sailors
went back home
leaving them to their own devices,
the two hulls seized their chance.
But their former masters, before leaving,
had not released their bonds.
Still tied together, they hung
awkwardly in the water.
The bigger half kept deciding
where they both would go,
bullied his poor sister.
At first she tried
to reason with him.
but in the end she fought back,
tried to break free.
Now we see them on the ocean.
locked in struggle.
How will they ever survive?

Mark Abraham

JAYEWARDENE'S YEARS OF POWER

A Contemporary Assessment (1987)

Part V

(Continued from previous issue)

The fact that a 7-year political dormancy separated Junius Richard Jayewardene's years of power and his death at the age of 90 may have had something to do with the charitable references, and the flattering obituaries and cosmetic acclaim that he earned at his death.

Public memory being what it is, short, and often selective, HOT SPRING brings to its readers the fifth part of a contemporary assessment and narrative of Jayewardene's years of power, written and published in 1987.

IN a 40-page booklet, titled 10 YEARS OF JAYEWARDENE RULE, the author S. Sivanayagam covered the years 1977 - 1987, and records a chunk of history that was both dark and depressing, and illustrative of the ignoble style of Jayewardene's governance.

SRI LANKA
10
Years of Jayewardene Rule

S.Sivanayagam

Even before the disgraceful events ofJuly 1983, as early as June 4, Government sources had begun to talk of war. The Colombo newspaper *Sun*, of that date quoted a Defence Ministry spokesman as saying that what the Army faced in Jaffna was a "war situation" and that the forces there had to be given the "freedom of the battlefield". That "freedom" was given by the tiring President by the beginning of 1984. Undisciplined soldiers ran amok, killed civilians on sight, sometimes any moving object in bad light such as goats and cows, but the "war" was nowhere near getting won. "Jaffna is a city of fear", reported David Graves in the Daily Telegraph, London (July 2, 1984). The President meanwhile was getting more desperate. During May-June he visited no less than four world capitals. On May 19, he was winging his way to Beijing, on June 16 he was in Washington, five days later in London and a few days later in Delhi. Russel Warren Howe reporting for the Washington Post, said :

> **"President Junius Jayewardene of Sri Lanka, now on a two -day official visit here, is expected to plead with the United States to intervene in his country if India uses force to protect Sri Lanka's Tamil (Indian) minority from growing ethnic violence. Although the US ambassador in Sri Lanka, former Republican Gov. John Reed of Maine has told Mr. Jayewardene that there is no prospect of America sending in the Marines to help the Sri Lankan government, the 78-year old president seems convinced that he can change Washington's mind, Western diplomats in Colombo are reporting. At a briefing for State Department correspondents on Friday, a senior US official stressed that there would be no security alliance between this country and Sri Lanka .... Although US-Sri Lanka relations are relatively warm, Western diplomats here are more and more concerned about the often eccentric behaviour of the aging South Asian leader, who has proclaimed his country to be the fulcrum of a camrpaign to save the world through Buddhism ......**

In London, the Sunday Times (24 July 1984) published a despatch from Mary Anne Weaver in Colombo, which said :

> **Sri Lanka's president J.R. Jayewardene flies to London this week to seek Mrs. Thatcher's support for his war against the "Tamil Tigers...... The president has already made an agreement with the Israeli intelligence organisation, Mossad, and has hired a group of mercenaries, veterans of the SAS to set up an intelligence organisation and a paramilitary force to combat the guerrilla threat. The Britons arrived in Sri Lanka from the Sultanate of Oman,**

to begin a years training programme.... Before Sri Lanka made its decision to hire mercenaries it asked Britain and the United States to set up an anti-terrorist assistance programme to be run by the CIA and M15. President Jayewardene has conceded that,because of pressure from large Tamil lobbies, London and Washington had turned down the request .... The Mossad's help has proved "invaluable", according to a Sri Lankan security force Physical conditions in the Jaffna Peninsula are identical to those in the Gaza strip. Some of Jayewardene's advisors are worried about the consequences. One western intelligence official said : What happens when an SAS-directed hit team goes against the Tigers in Madras? It is just this kind of foolhardy behaviour that could lead to an Indian invasion.. ..?

“ Two days of rather prickly talks between the two.....”

What happened in Delhi? The Times, London (July 3) in a report from its correspondent, said :

> "Two days of rather prickly talks between President Jayewardene and Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister ended yesterday with the President marking off the proposals he is making on the future devolution of power within Sri Lanka as none of her business. In the formal statement he made at the end of the talks, he said : 'I reiterated to the Prime Minister my view that the political resolution of this matter is an internal matter of Sri Lanka, to be settled between the various Sri Lankan parties concerned". He added "and she entirely ,agreed".... Although Mr. Jayewardene told reporters that he would be happy to use the good offices of anybody towards solving what he called not the Tamil problem - the Tamil disaster", he was adamant that the Indian view would not influence him......

in the event that Mrs. Gandhi had smiled, as Mr. Jayewardene's back was turned, certainly no one saw it, and no one reported it. The President might not have been full of beans on his homeward journey as when he set forth on his Washington-London-Delhi foray but his sense of bravado did at no time leave him. Back home he ordered another offensive on the Tamils. Time magazine said in its issue of 27 August (by Spencer Davidson. Reported by K.K. Sharma / Colombo) :-

> For two weeks the violence had spread through Sri Lanka's Northern province, a bloody tit for tat of ambush and attack, pitting government forces against insurgents fighting for independence for the country's predominantly Hindu Tamil minority. Roads lay deserted. banks and offices were shuttered, and shops opened for only a few hours each day By the time a measure of calm had been restored last week, at least 1 50 people had lost their lives, including 25 government troops the worst blood letting in Sri Lanka since July 1983. Said a Western diplomat in Colombo. This is the first sustained and significant challenge to the government's authority in a year .
>
> The violence reached a climax early last week when troops rampaged in Mannar, about 50 miles southeast of Jaffna, in retaliation for a Tiger ambush in which ten military men were said to have died. By the time the soldiers' destructive fury was spent. 123 shops had been burned, and five Mannar residents lay dead. A local army commander promised that those guilty would be punished and that "no government would condone the army's running amuck' . Said the officer. The soldiers were incited by the sight of the bodies of their dead comrades'.

President Jayewardene might not have made any policy breakthroughs in Beijing, Washington or London, but he was certainly getting arms. Minister of State Anandatissa de Alwis told newspaper editors in Colombo on December 7 that part of the foreign military equipment had already arrived. The government had ordered a significant military build-up, he said. In London, Jane's Defence Weekly reported that Sri Lanka will get five more Chinese naval craft by the end of the year. The deal was concluded during Mr. Jayewardene's Chinese visit. The Sri Lankan Navy was already known to have five Chinese "Shanghai-11" class fast attack craft, besides two large patrol boats capable of offshore operations and 22 coastal patrol craft. On December 23, the Government announced in Colombo that armed forces will now use rockets, bombs and small-calibre artillery against "Tamil separatist guerrillas". On December 31 the Colombo Sinhala news paper, the Divaina, quoting a government spokesman said five friendly countries, both Western and socialist, have offered military aid to Sri Lanka, the aid to include fighter planes and ships . They are expected to reach the country in January, the paper said.

It was obvious during the last month in 1984 that the Government was getting confident that with this massive military assistance, it could go in for a military solution. A war psyche was being built in order to prepare the Sinhalese people to accept more sacrifices. They were being told through the columns of the racist State-controlled media that an invasion of Sri Lanka was being organised from India, thus proving how true was that hoary maxim by Dr. Samuel Johnson : "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." As the year ended, on December 31, the top-thumping Minister for National security was quoted as saying that for every man that the Tamil militants trained in any part of the world, "we will train a hundred persons".

The month of December 1984 was to prove decisive in many other ways. The Colombo All-Party Conference was reconvened for December 14, and the TULF delegation had arrived three days ahead. But it appeared doomed even at that point of time. US special envoy General Walters had just concluded two days of "intensive talks" on the military solution with President Jayewardene and Laiith Athulathmudali (Dec. 10, 11). On the 10th itself, the Government-owned Daily News announced that Gen. Walters was expected to discuss "a shopping list of military supplies necessary to meet the terrorist threat". The paper also reported that there was a strong possibility of "Britain providing helicopters and patrol boats to overcome the terrorist menace". The Round Table Conference met as scheduled on the 14th and President Jayewardene went through the motions. He proposed the amendment of the constitution for the setting up of Provincial Councils and a second chamber for resolving the "ethnic problem". The Buddhist clergy boycotted the talks, and on the following day when Mr. Amirthalingam was talking of "studying the President's proposals in depth", the Buddhist clergy warned the President not to try to rush the proposals until "terrorism was completely eliminated". On December 21, the All Party Conference ended abruptly. Delegates, including TULF leaders who had gone ready to discuss the proposals were told, if not in so many words, that there was nothing to discuss. On December 22, it was announced that the President's proposals had been rejected by all Sinhalese parties, including an influential section of the President's own party. On December 24, the President sacked his racist Minister of Industries Cyril Mathew. It was like bolting the stable door after the horse had fled. By year end, the mass psychosis had reached fever-pitch.. The Colombo newspaper The Island in its Sunday issue of December 30 ran a lead news item under the headline: LANKA PONDERS STEPS IF EELAMISTS DECLARE UDI. The report said:

"The Sri Lanka Government is considering counter measures in the event of Eelamist groups making a Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Sources said that information had been received of such attempts being made by expatriate Tamil groups, abroad . ., According to intelligence sources, the Eelamist strategy is to proclaim a new state called Eelam on January 14, Thai Pongal Day ... Sources also said that the assistance of the Pakistan Embassy had been sought in this respect. The Embassy was asked by the Foreign Ministry what action was taken by the Pakistaii government when Bangladesh was declared an independent sovereign state in the aftermath of the war .....

Came Thai Pongal Day, January 14,1985 and there were no signs of any UDI. It was either that some panic merchants or arms dealers had sold Sri Lanka that story, or that the Governmerit itself had spread the hysteria in order to gain international sympathy.

(to be continued)

J.R.J: Some pronouncements

Arguing against the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of June 1957

"The time has come for the whole Sinhalese race, which has existed for 2,500 years, jealously safeguarding their language (Sinhala) and religion (Buddhism) to fight (the Tamils) without giving any quarter to preserve their birthright".

During interview with Ian Ward of DAILY TELEGRAPH, July 11, 1983, two weeks before the anti-Tamil pogrom

"I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people...now, we cannot think of them, not about their lives or their opinion. .... the more you put pressure in the North (Tamil areas) the happier Sinhala people will be here.... really, if I starve the Tamils out the Sinhala people will be happy..."

In the course of an interview with INDIA TODAY, July 1984

"The worst that India can do to us is to invade us. If they invade, that is the end of Tamils in the country".

In the course of a BBC interview on October 25, 1985

"Tamil problem ....has to be tackled militarily...we were not ready earlier. Now we are acquiring arms and getting our soldiers trained. We are getting ready for a decisive military action strike again.

"I am not fully prepared to tackle Jaffna. I want to finish first with the other provinces. It is not difficult to handle Jaffna. We can cut off food supplies to the peninsula and flush out the terrorist (Tamils) in a month's time

"If India were to intervene in some way to stop this genocide.... But if that happens, then all the Tamils living among the Sinhalese will be finished".

U.S. State Dept. definition

When a nation bombs its own citizens, it is not terrorism!

The Ilankai Tamil Sangam USA Inc.(Association of Tamils of Sri Lanka in the USA) has sent the following letter, dated May 6, 1997 to the Editor NEW YORK TIMES:-

Letters to the Editor
229 West 43rd Street
New York, NY, 10036

Subject: Report on Political Terrorism: State vs. (Brutalize) Citizens.

Your report in NYT (May 1, 1997) refers to the State Department's annual study on "political terrorism." The article intelligently points out that when a nation's airforce bombs civilians it is not defined as terrorism but if [brutalized & marginalized] civilians blow up state property it is. The remaining body of the article, however, simplisticly ranks diverse and unique national struggles using a single scale of terrorism and body count. Once the terminology is flawed the potential for abuse is high, and your readers need to be alerted, particularly in view of the forthcoming "blacklist of terrorist groups."

All freedom struggles by subjected people first get branded negatively, and the process of marginalization and muddling then begins. Remember, during the period of slavery in the US it was illegal to teach a black person to read or write, and any American who tried to help was branded as a traitor! On the other hand during the American War for Independence from British masters it was perfectly fine to get organized and kill as many British rulers as possible; it was not political terrorism but a struggle for independence.

Likewise, to some, when Sri Lankan armed forces cumulatively massacre over 30,000 Tamil citizens it is not State Terrorism. It is a legitimate "strategy" to contain unconnected people and their demands. When 58 political Tamil prisoners were butchered [July 27, 1983] by Sri Lankan government assisted thugs (which included a Gandhian movement leader Dr. Rajasunderam), it was not State Terrorism [see The Guardian (UK), Aug. 5, 1983, also Amnesty International Report June 1984]. When nine Sri Lankan security personal abducted Ms. Krishanthi Kumarasamy (a bright and diligent Jaffna school girl, age 17, Sept. 1996), gang raped, killed and mutilated her body it was not State Terrorism. When Krishanthi's mother, brother and a friend went to the military checkpoint to inquire about her whereabouts, all three got murdered by the security forces, and it was still not Sustained State Terrorism, but an incident by rogue soldiers 150 rapes committed by the military has been documented in 1996 alone. When the airforce bombed the Navaly St. Peter & Paul's Church and killed 121 Tamil civilians, it was obviously not State Terrorism NYT July 14, 1995, but collateral damage! In fact, the US State Department's representative, Nancy Rubin, to 53rd UN Human Rights Commission, has asserted Geneva, April 1997 the disappearance of 700 Tamil youths in 1996 alone at the hands of State military officials, and yet there has been no reporting in the NYT, nor has a terminology been in place to refer to a government with such an incriminating record. Even on the basis of the body count, according to the rules you have applied, it is not too hard to see who the real terrorist is.

Yet, when a financial nerve center in Colombo is attacked, the whole world is told of the "terrorist" attack. Have we, as an international community, lost the sense of suffering of fellow human beings? While destruction is deplorable, are we showing our hypersensitivity to the vulnerable nature of the New World's financial structure? It is high time that political considerations involved in publicizing selected reports and events be balanced by a vision filled with humanistic and ethical considerations. Understanding human relationships and cultures is a never-ending process, further made complex by historical currents. The word terrorism is now being narrowly defined and broadly applied to ostracize and marginalize groups that do not fall in line with dominant powers, regardless of the legitimacy of the struggle. We need to exercise our maturity and conviction to allow people to solve their problems their way. Providing a crude binary characterization -good guys vs. terrorists- ,without a deep understanding of a conflict, will only fuel more misery and will be a disservice to the people. The US has an opportunity to set a new leadership standard on this important world issue and should not get politically muddled by trying to marginalize a legitimate struggle for freedom.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sri M. Sri-Jayantha

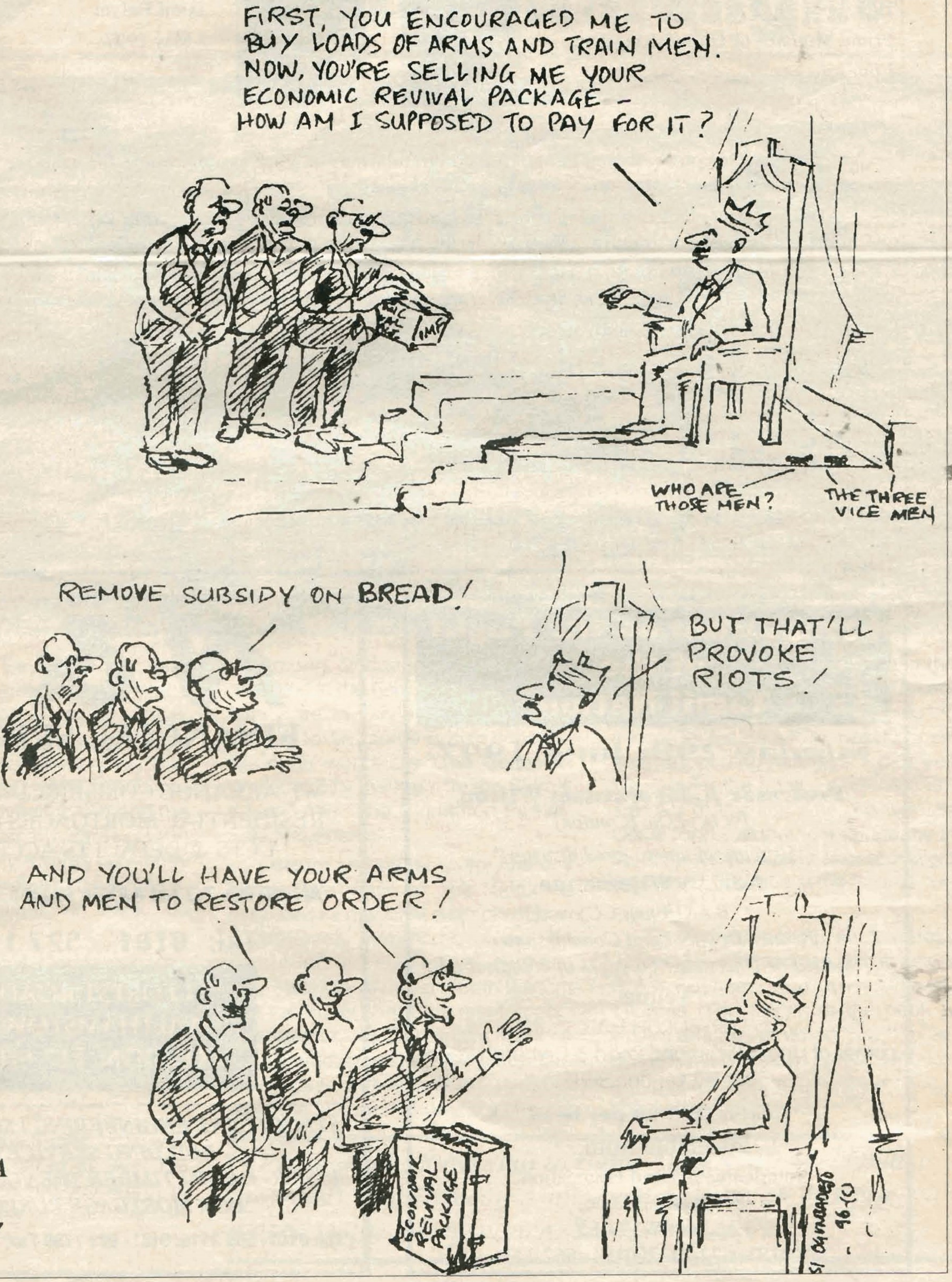
General Secretary of ITS

32, Sherwood Ave., Ossining, NY 10562

CARTOON COMMENT

by Bisi Ogunbadejo

IMF'S SELF-RIOTOUS TIDINGS


FIRST, YOU ENCOURAGED ME TO BUY LOADS OF ARMS AND TRAIN MEN. NOW, YOU'RE SELLING ME YOUR ECONOMIC REVIVAL PACKAGE - HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO PAY FOR IT?
IMF
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THE THREE VICE MEN
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AND YOU'LL HAVE YOUR ARMS AND MEN TO RESTORE ORDER!
ECONOMIC REVIVAL PACKAGE
SI OGUNBADEJO 96(C)

Courtesy:
PANAFRICA
magazine
February 97

LTTE leader's message to Tony Blair

Hon. Tony Blair
Prime Minister of United Kingdom
London

LTTE Headquarters
Tamil Eelam
3 May 1997

Dear Sir

We wish to convey to you our sincere congratulations on your assumption to the office of Prime Minister following the massive electoral victory of your political party.

We are confident that under your able guidance and progressive leadership Britain will play a constructive role in the creation of a harmonious world order by alleviating global poverty, racial oppression and social injustice.

The Tamil Nation in Sri Lanka, which has been engaged in a long and determined struggle to freely choose its political status, looks upon your new Government for support and sympathy to win its legitimate political rights.

Our best wishes for your success.

Yours Sincerely

(Signed) V Pirapaharan
Leader, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

(LTTE Leader V.Pirapaharan's letter is released by LTTE International Secretariat, 211 Katherine Road, London E6 1BU, United Kingdom. Tel:0181- 503 4294)

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The English Patient

Michael Ondaatje in the limelight

Born in Ceylon in the year 1943 (before the island degenerated into Sri Lanka), Michael Ondaatje is the author of the 1994 Booker prize winning novel, THE ENGLISH PATIENT. Now turned into an elegant and dynamic film and the winner of nine Oscar awards, at the glittering Academy Awards ceremony held on 24th March at Los Angeles, USA, the spotlight is back on Ondaatje.

Who is Michael Ondaatje? Now domiciled in Canada and USA, and receiving accolades from around the world for his masterpiece novel, he claims part Tamil ancestry, part Sinhala ancestry, and part Dutch and English ancestry.

The sales of the Booker prize winning novel has soared all over the world, with over £500,000 worth of paperbacks being sold in the UK alone.

Among Ondaatje's other books, "Running in the Family" , a portrayal of family life in Ceylon is now a prescribed text in some British schools. His other works are "The Collected Works of Billy the Kid", "In the Skin of a Lion" and "The Cinnamon Peeler: Selected Poems"

Director and screen writer Anthony Minghella's film of the book is described as a brilliant example of how a supremely literary novel can be turned into an elegant yet dynamic film. Says the reviewer: "Both the film and the novel share the most important element of Ondaatje's work: a deeply emotional story about how life-giving passion exists in the midst of war. And some of Ondaatje's images are beautifully visual, and among the film's most stunning. The Oscars claimed by the movie version included awards for the Best Film, Best Director, Best Supporting Actress. "Thank you Michael for the book", said the cameraman of the film who too won an Oscar for his stunning photogaphy in the film, while recipient after receipient mentioned Ondsatje at the Awards ceremony.

The film stars the French actress Juliette Binoche and two British actors Ralph Fiennes and Kristin Scott-Thomas. The theme of the book is woven around the World War II experiences of a Canadian nurse, her burnt out patient and a few other shell-shocked victims of war.

Photograph shows (left to right) Author Michael Ondaatje (bearded), and Director Anthony Minghella on location with Willem Dafoe and Naveen Andrews.

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Racist SPUR and racist Colombo newspaper

HOT SPRING reader in Colombo, "N.W", writes:

Dear Editor,

You have done well to expose the sexual misadventures of the Sri Lankan doctor Nihal Senarath Heenetigala, who has not only done discredit to the Hippocratic oath of medical ethics , but has given a bad name to his country and his race in a foreign country. If as Dr.Johnson once said: Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, the violent Sinhala Buddhist patriotism of Heenetigala in Australia is a good illustration of Johnson's dictum. I am sure you are aware of Colombo's own racist newspaper, THE ISLAND, which is the flag-bearer of Sinhala-Buddhist patriotism in the country, and keeps spewing anti-Tiger venom all the time. I am enclosing the copy of a editorial of this paper dated January 12, 1997, which you might find relevant.

While thanking reader "N.W", we reproduce below some extracts from the editorial comment referred to - *Ed.HS.*

Raising funds

".... In order to take on this terror network, it is obvious that any Sri Lankan government should be backed to the hilt by the expatriate Sri Lankan communities living in Europe, Canada, United States, Australia, UK and other countries.Fighting against much odds, Sri Lankan organisations in Canada, Australia and other countries have been able to blunt much of the LTTE propaganda that is being carried on, by meeting community leaders, politicians and publication of their own journals. Recent reports indicate that in Australia, an organisation, SPUR, has been able to do much to counter the vicious propaganda that has been carried against this country. THEY HAVE ALSO RAISED FUNDS TO HELP THE SRI LANKAN ARMED FORCES IN MANY WAYS.

"Unfortunately, this support of patriotic Sri Lankans is being frowned upon and even laughed at by some intellectuals and now the supporters of this government. Any opposition expressed by these organisations against the Devolution Package is considered a form of racism and Sinhala chauvinism.

Sinhalayo Abroad

"Typical is the Editorial of the DAILY NEWS of January 10 titled "Sinhalayo Abroad".These Sinhalese, the editorial contends, have gone abroad with their children and make the excuse of the children's education for migration.

"The mother tongue was not good enough for them. The truth is that these emigrants were attracted by materialistic culture of those countries. They were anglicised and alienated by the conditioning of their class, the DAILY NEWS claims, and takes on SPUR , the Australian organisation for opposing the devolution proposals.

"We frankly do not believe that this is the opinion of the present Editor of the DAILY NEWS who was a colleague of ours. It is the opinion of a government hack writer who has been forced upon the editor.

Parisian University

"Surely, when the DAILY NEWS is stridently critical about sending their children abroad for education, being anglicized and succumbing to material culture etc., they should consider the leaders of the present government itself. Take President Kumaratunga who did not go to the University of Ceylon but to a Parisian University about which she still gets nostalgic about Her children attend international schools in Colombo presumably with the intention of pursuing higher education abroad. PA cabinet's intellectual heavy weights Prof.G.L.Peiris and Lakshman Kadirgamar get great mileage out of their post graduate degrees at Oxford. It has been reported that even a present minister of proletarian origin has sent children for their primary education to Britain!

"Is it wrong for these Sri Lankans to stand up for their mother country and speak the plain truth ? Are they to sit back and watch the pro-LTTE demonstrators march through foreign capitals smearing Sri Lanka's name ?

"Do they become racists because they do not agree - rightly or wrongly - with the proposal of dividing this island into six regions ? Is the Devolution Package such a holy and infallible text that any opposition to it should lead to government propagandists calling upon any opposition to it to be burnt at stake? ..."

Buying arms instead of alleviating poverty

South Asia is the poorest and most illiterate region in the world, yet its governments divert scarce resources to buying weapons instead of alleviating poverty, a U.N. report charged on April 9..

"The South Asia region has been sinking fast into a quagmire of human deprivation and despair," said the paper, released at the end of a three-day seminar on development in South Asia, held in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Mahbub-ul Haq, the author of the report and founder of the Pakistan-based Human Development Center, said the reasons for South Asia's slide include political instability, bad governments, corruption and lawlessness.

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BROKEN PROMISES :

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An historical record of how Sinhala leaders make and break pledges.

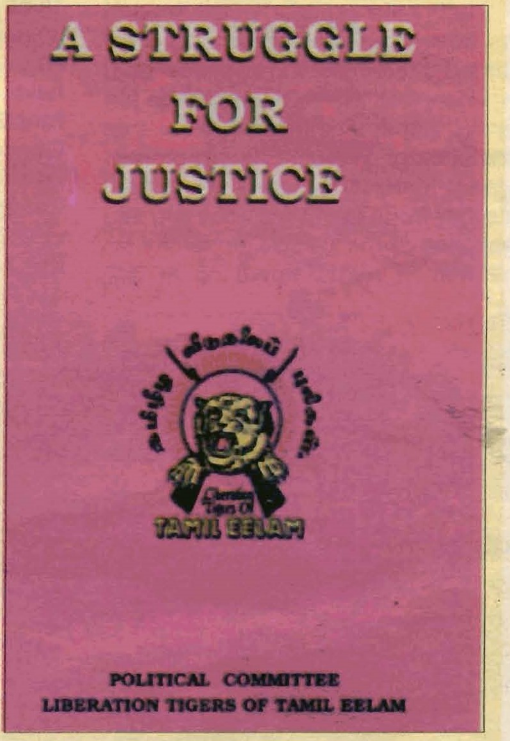
"At every important juncture and at every decisive moment, the Sinhalese leaders have been very lavish in giving promises to the Tamils, but when the crisis has passed, they have failed to keep their pledges", says the Introduction to the book.

"Making promises and then reneging on them - this is one of the techniques of oppression and deceit adopted by the Sinhalese leadrership which feels no compunction in breaking its pledges overnight".

Mr.M.Thirunavukkarasu who has compiled and edited the book says: "I have attempted to set down here, in chronological order, the promises given to the Tamil people by the Sinhala leaders from the time of D.S.Senanayake onwards."

The book is published by the International Federation of Tamils, 202, Long Lane, London SE1 4QB, and printed at "Thamil Achchakam" (Tamil Press), France.

A STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE:



This is an 18-page document released by the Political Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and published by the International Secretariat, 211 , Katherine Road, London E6 1BU, U.K.

This political document attempts to clarify some of the misconceptions surrounding the armed struggle of the Tamils. While examining the historical conditions that gave rise to the armed resistance movement, the document argues that the Tamils reserve the right to armed defence against the military repression and genocide. Countering Sri Lanka's false propaganda that the Tamil struggle is a mode of terrorism, the document explains that the armed campaign is a form of legitimate political struggle for self-determination. In brief the document sets out the position of the Tamils based on their quest for political independence and self-government.

"An atmosphere of racist hate against Tamils"

Viraj Mendis

On the 9th of April, this year, 1500 Tamils gathered together during a peaceful demonstration in The Hague to present a petition to the Lower House of Parliament. In response to the Dutch High Court's March 13th detrimental decision concerning forced Tamil repatriation, the United Tamils Forum organized a seminar and peace-march to address the question "Is Sri Lanka safe for Tamils? ". The UTF asks the Dutch government and her citizens to open themselves to the manifold evidence which testifies to the violations of human rights committed against Tamils in Sri Lanka.

During the seminar, guest speakers from The Netherlands and from abroad shared their knowledge and experience of the political situation for Tamils within The Netherlands, the existence of a deeply rooted racism against Tamils in Sri Lanka, the degree of safety for Tamils in Colombo and the response of the world community to the human rights violations in Sri Lanka. All speakers emphasized the importance of gaining foreign recognition of the desperate situation which Tamils in Sri Lanka find themselves in.

Rev. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel; Vicar General of the Jaffna diocese, is a Tamil born and raised in Jaffna. He has witnessed the oppression and the degradation which the Tamil people have endured for the past 50 years. Rev. Emmanuel interrupted his stay in Geneva, where he was testifying for the 53rd session of the United Nations Conference on Human Rights, to travel to The Netherlands and inform the Dutch of the tribulations of Tamils. . During his speech, the Reverend called upon '...all the countries in which Tamils have sought their refuge, to honor the Geneva Convention and to refrain from returning Tamils to Sri Lanka against their will; because their lives are truly in danger.". He further explained that the tensions in Sri Lanka have so escalated during the past two years that he himself is in genuine fear of moving about in Colombo. Rev. Emmanuel warned that if a country wants to know the truth, it must actively search for it and not passively accept what the Sri Lankan government lays before them.

The Secretary of the German based 'Campaign for Human Rights in Sri Lanka', Viraj Mendis, addressed the audience, describing the relationship between Sinhalese chauvinism and the racism against Tamils in Sri Lanka. Mr. Mendis is himself a Sinhalese and is deeply concerned about the Sri Lankan government's spiraling war against the Tamils. He illustrated how the government encour-

ages an atmosphere of racist hate against Tamils and how the Sinhalese are manipulated into taking part in the creation of a police state in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan lawyer and Secretary of the 'All Ceylon Tamil Congress', Kumar Ponnambalam, has lived his entire life as a Tamil in Colombo. Of the thousands of Tamils who have been detained under the Emergency Rule and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 95% received their legal aid from Mr. Ponnambalam. In his presentation he refuted the Ministry's delusion of a Colombo which is safe for Tamils and he described the dangers of being Tamil in the capital city. Police gather Tamils indiscriminately from the streets and detain them until reports from five different government departments have been presented. Some of those who are brought to the police station never return.

The Dutch lawyer, Mr. C.J. Schoorl said that the Dutch government has used insufficient accurate information in her judgment of the situation in Sri Lanka. He predicted that when the Dutch government assumes a broad base of independent information and takes into consideration the findings of other European countries, she will quickly come to the conclusion that Sri Lanka is indeed not safe for Tamils.

Jan Ruiter, coordinator of the Mozeshuis, as well as for the Mozes and Aaron Church in Amsterdam, said; "The United Tamils Forum has a very clear petition. The lawyer Schoorl presents us with a very good explanation. I admire the persistence of the Tamils and their lawyers. I support your petition heartily and shall gladly continue to extend my cooperation in the future.".

Social & Personal

Kokuvil Hindu Old Students U.K.branch Get-together

The Kokuvil Hindu College Old Students Association (U.K.) held its annual get-together and cultural event with a variety entertainment on 3rd May, at the Claremont High School hall, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex.

Editor HOT SPRING, S.Sivanayagam was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Rich variety entertainment was provided by a Veena recital by pupils of Srimathi Sivasakthi Sivanesan, a vocal recital by Mrs.Sivanesan herself, a splendid Bharatha Natya performance by students of Sri Prakash Yadagudde of the Bharati Vidya Bhavan, a humorous monologue by young Prasanna Thevarajan, culminating in a Drums Ensemble titled East & West.

Participants in the Drums Ensemble were M.Balachander (Mirdhangam Peter McDonald (Western Drums), Guitar (Trevor Warren), Keyboard (Dorian) Ganjeera (Priyadharshan Thevarajan) and Ghatam and Morsing (Prasanna Thevarajan). The compere was Mrs.Vidya Maheethan.

KOKUVIL HINDU COLLEGE
OLD STUDENTS ASSOCIATION U.K

Civil marriage celebrant

Mr.T.Kandasamy of Adelaide, South Australia has been appointed a Civil Marriage Celebrant. He is the first Sri Lankan to be given this appointment and also the first to be appointed as Justice of Peace in South Australia.

Before he migrated to Australia, Mr.Kandasamy served as Education Officer in the Ministry of Education, Colombo.

Obituaries

Dr. C. Rabindran

Dr. Chelliah Rabindran (49) from Udupiddy, Jaffna, Consultant Princess Margaret Hospital, Swindon, husband of Dr. Panchu Arunachalam, passed away on 12th March 1997.

Dr. Rabindran is survived by his wife and three children Ahilan (14), Janaki (11) and Parathan (6).

3 Carlton Gate, Broome Manor, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN3 1NS, 01793-485 256

* * * *

Mrs.Suntharavalli Tharmalingam

Mrs.Suntharavalli Tharmalingam, wife of Dr.S.A. Tharmalingam, onetime Mayor of Jaffna, now at Brentwood, U.K., passed away on 4th May. She was 82. Cremation took place at Upminster crematorium on 8th May.

Mrs.Tharmalingam was the mother of Mrs.Tharmambal Navaratnam, (Brentwood, U.K.), the late Dr.(Mrs.Tharmavalli Sathyamoorthy, Dr.(Mrs.) Tharmasothy Balarajan (London), and Dr.(Mrs) Tharmadevi Vignarajah (Australia); mother-in-law of Dr.Navaratnam (Brentwood), late Dr.Sathyamoorthy, Prof. Balarajan (London),and Dr.Vignarajah (Australia); grandmother of Sarvesvaran, Janani, Jeyaganeshan, Dr.Vaseeharan (South Africa), Anand, Varshini, Yarlini, Thayalan and Dinesh.

5, Windy Hill, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2HF (Tel:01277 223981).

* * * *

Dr.H.W.Tambiah

Dr.Tambiah,Queen's Counsel and Judge of the Supreme Court.Sri Lanka, for 12 years, and later Judge of the Court of Appeal in Sierra Leone and Gambia. He was 91.

* * * *

Wijayananda Dahanayake

Unconventional Sinhala politician and Prime Minister of Ceylon for a brief period of six months in 1959, died at the age of 91.

* * * *

Mrs.Kanthimathy Nallaratnam

Widow of the late Alexander Nallaratnam, mother of Rathini, Dayanithi, Dayanathan, Rathindran, Devakumar, Niranjan and Shiromi, mother-in-law of Yogaraj an, Rajkumar, Carla, Nirmala, Shanthi, Shankari and Rohan, died on 25 April.

59, Cambridge Road, North Harrow, Middx.HA2 7LB (Phone: 0181-429 3814).

* * * *

Ravindran John

Ravindran John, better known in Colombo as Ravi John, television celebrity, popular compere and presenter par excellence, passed away at a private hospital in Colombo on April 23. He was 35. Funeral took place on April 26. He leaves his wife Rashmi and son Dinendran.

* * * *

LTTE Video Cassette on the Mullaitivu battle

ஜூன், ஜூலை, ஓகஸ்ட் 1996
ஒளிவீச்சு
OLIVEECHU
ஜூன், ஜூலை, ஓகஸ்ட் - 1996

The LTTE's video cassette for the combined months of June, July and August 1996 was released recently. Produced by LTTE's film unit, NIDHARSHANAM the cassette contains among a variety of features the LTTE attack on the Mullaitivu army camp, the Sri Lankan offensive in Kilinochchi , the destruction of three tanks and the displacement of two and a half lakhs of Tamils following the offensive.

HOT SPRING understands that this and earlier Nidharshanam cassettes are available for sale at all LTTE outlets and offices in Europe and other parts of the world.

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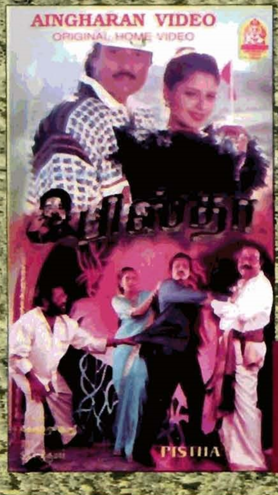
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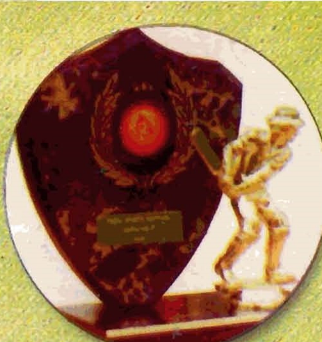
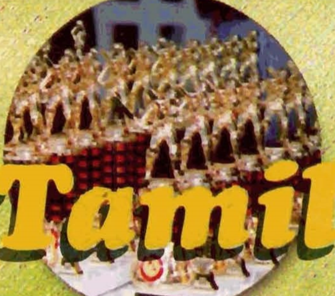
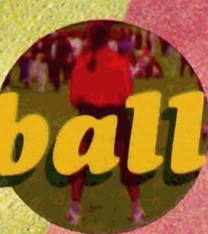




Tamil Cricket Festival

&

Netball Tournament



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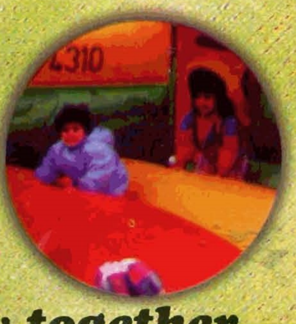

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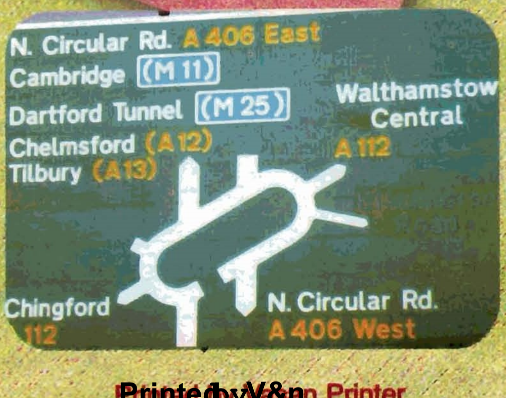
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